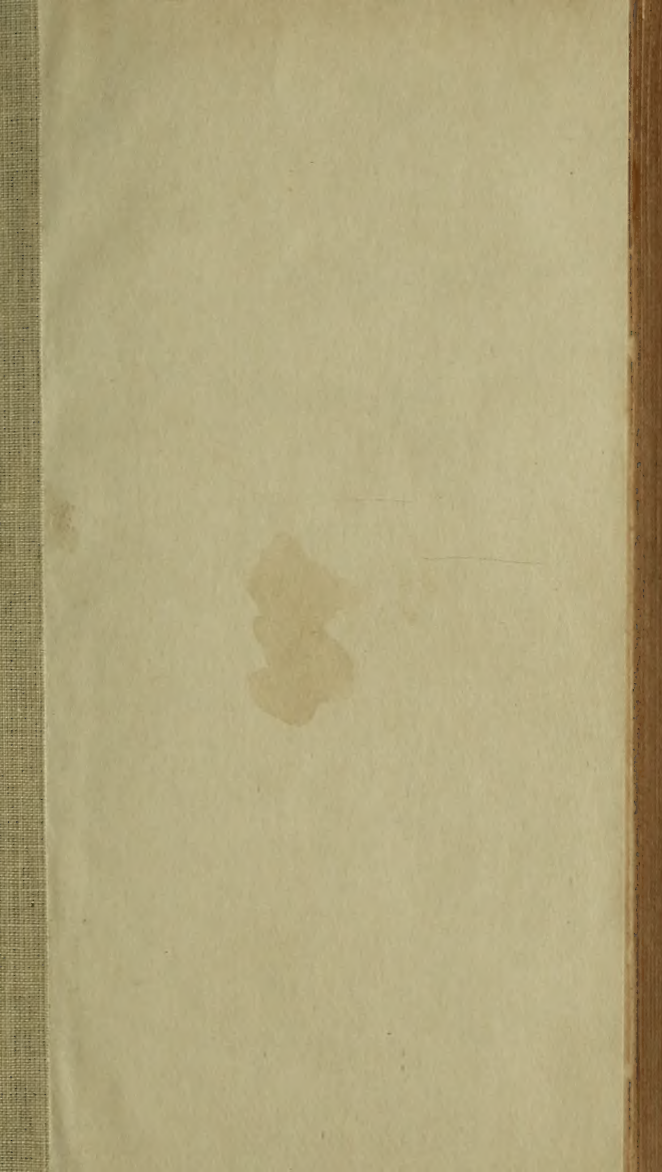


DUKE UNIVERSITY
DIVINITY SCHOOL
LIBRARY



FRANK BAKER COLLECTION
OF
WESLEYANA
AND
BRITISH METHODISM



W. J. Astor
65 Westbourne St
Pimlico

CHRISTIANITY AND PASTORS

STATIONER

1854 A French Manuscript of the 14th

JOHN WILLIAM DE LA SALLE

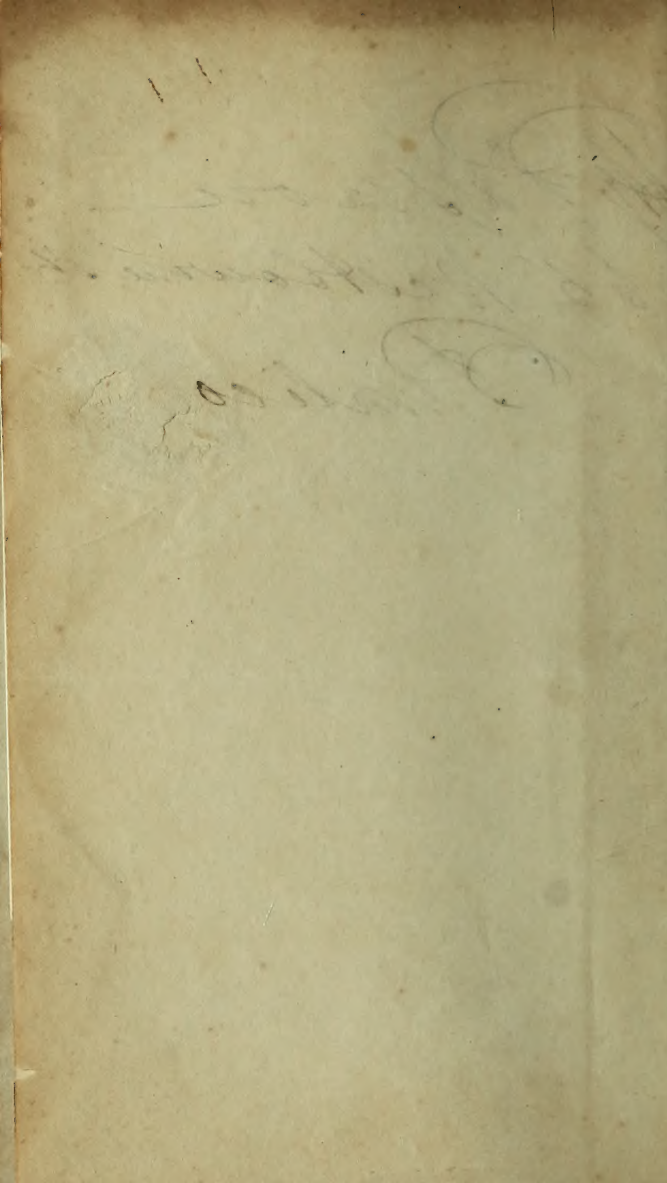
FRANCIS W. MASON

By the Rev. JOSHUA COLEMAN

High Church, in the County of Essex

The French Manuscript

London



THE
PORTRAIT
OF
ST. PAUL:
OR, THE
TRUE MODEL
FOR
CHRISTIANS AND PASTORS.

TRANSLATED

From a French Manuscript of the Late

REV. JOHN WILLIAM DE LA FLECHERE,

VICAR OF MADELEY,

BY THE REV. JOSHUA GILPIN,

VICAR OF ROCKWARDINE, IN THE COUNTY OF SALOP.



The Fourth Edition.



Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.—1 COR. xi. 1.



London:

PRINTED FOR W. BAYNES, 54, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1806.

TO

Div. S.
225.92
P324GPA

JAMES IRELAND, ESQUIRE.

OF BRISLINGTON, NEAR BRISTOL,

THE

FOLLOWING WORK IS

RESPECTFULLY ADDRESSED,

AS A MONUMENT

OF THE LONG AND INTIMATE FRIENDSHIP,

WHICH SUBSISTED BETWEEN HIM

AND THE AUTHOR;

AND

AS A PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGMENT

OF THE VERY LIBERAL

ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT,

WITH WHICH HE HAS FAVOURED

HIS TRULY OBLIGED

AND OBEDIENT SERVANT,

THE TRANSLATOR.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following work was undertaken, and nearly completed, during M. de la FLECHERE's last residence in Switzerland, where it was originally intended for publication.

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

MANY celebrated writers have offered excellent treatises to the public, some on the character of a true christian, and others on the duties of a good pastor. It were to be wished, that these two objects might be so closely united, as to fall under the same point of view : and to effect such an union is the design of this work, in which may be seen, at one view, what were the primitive christians and the apostolic pastors ; and what they are required to be, who are called to follow them in the progress of piety.

As *example* is more powerful than *precept*, it was necessary that some person should be singled out, who was both an excellent christian, and an eminent minister of Jesus Christ. The person we fix upon is St. Paul, in whom these two characters were remarkably united, and a sketch of whose wondrous Portrait we endeavour to exhibit in the following pages. When this Apostle is considered as a christian, his diligence in filling up the duties of his vocation, his patience in times of trial, his courage in the midst of dangers, his perseverance in well-doing, his faith, his humility, his charity, all sweetly blended together, constitute him an admirable model for every christian. And when we regard him as a dispenser of the mysteries of God, his inviolable attachment to truth, and his unconquerable zeal, equally distant from fanaticism and indifference, deserve the imitation of every minister of the Gospel.

The Holy Scripture furnish materials in abundance for the present work, *The Acts of the Apostles* from

chapter viii. containing little else than a narration of the labours of St. Paul, or an abridgment of his sermons and apologies. The new Testament, besides the Acts, contains twenty two different books, fourteen of which were composed by this Apostle himself, with all the frankness suited to the epistolary style, and all the personal detail, into which he was obliged to enter, when writing in an uncommon variety of circumstances, to his friends, his brethren and his spiritual children. It is on such occasions, that a man is most likely to discover, what he really is: and it is on such occasions, that the moral painter may take an author in the most interesting positions, in order to delineate, with accuracy, his sentiments, his circumstances, and his conduct.

Let it not be said, that in proposing this Apostle as a model to christians, we do but cast discouragements in the way of those, who are at an immense distance behind him, with respect both to grace and diligence. The masterly skill, that Raphael and Rubens have discovered in their pieces, serves not to discourage modern painters, who rather labour to form themselves by such grand models. Poets and orators are not disheartened by those *chef-doeuvres* of poetry and eloquence, which Homer and Virgil, Demosthenes and Cicero, have transmitted to posterity: why then should we be discouraged by considering the eminent virtues and unwearied labours of this great apostle? The greater the excellence of the pattern proposed, the less likely is the laboured copy to be incomplete.

It is granted, that all the faithful are not called to be ministers, and that all ministers are not appointed, like St. Paul, to establish new churches: but it is maintained, that all christians, in their different states, are to be filled with the piety of that Apostle. If the most inconsiderable trader among us is not allowed to say, "I deal only in trifling articles, and therefore" "should be indulged with a false balance"—if such a

trader is required to be as just in his shop, as a judge on his tribunal; and if the lowest volunteer in an army is called to show as much valour in his humble post, as a general officer in his more exalted station; the same kind of reasoning may be applied to the christian church: so that her youngest communicant is not permitted to say, "my youth, or the weakness of my sex, excuses me from exercising the charity, the humility, the diligence, and the zeal, which the Scriptures prescribe."

It should be laid down as an incontrovertible truth, that the same zeal which was manifested by St. Paul for the glory of God, and the same charity, that he displayed, *as an Apostle*, in the very extensive scene of his labours, a minister is called to exercise, *as a pastor*, in his parish, and a private person, *as father of a family*, in his own house. Nay, even every woman, in proportion to her capacity, and as the other duties of her station permit, should feel the same ardour to promote the salvation of her children and domestics, as St. Paul once discovered to promote that of the ancient Jews and Gentiles. Observe, in the harvest-field, how it fares with the labourers, when they are threatened with an impetuous shower. All do not bind and bear the weighty sheaves. Every one is occupied according to their rank, their strength, their age, and their sex; and all are in action, even to the little gleaners. The true church resembles this field. The faithful of every rank, age, and sex, have but one heart and one mind. According to their state, and the degree of their faith, all are animated to labour in the cause of God, and all are endeavouring to save either communities, families, or individuals, from the wrath to come; as the reapers and gleaners endeavour to secure the rich sheaves, and even the single ears of grain, from the gathering storm.

If, in the course of this work, some truths are proposed, which may appear new to the christian reader,

let him candidly appeal, for the validity of them, to the Holy Scriptures, and to the testimony of reason, supported by the most respectable authorities, such as the confessions of faith adopted by the purest churches, together with the works of the most celebrated pastors and professors, who have explained such confessions.

Among other excellent ends proposed in publishing the following sheets, it is hoped, that they may bring back bigoted divines to evangelical moderation, and either reconcile, or bring near to one another, the orthodox professor, the imperfect christian, and the sincere deist.

THE
FIRST TRAIT
IN THE
MORAL CHARACTER
OF
ST. PAUL.

HIS EARLY PIETY.

THE great apostle of the Gentiles bore no resemblance to those, who reject the service of God, till they are rendered incapable of gratifying their unruly passions. He was mindful of his Creator from his early youth, and as an observer of religious rites outstripped the most exact, and rigid professors of his time : so that the regularity of his conduct, the fervour of his devotion, and the vivacity of his zeal, attracted the attention of his superiors in every place. Observe the manner in which he himself speaks on this subject, before the tribunal of Festus : ‘ My manner of life, from my youth, which was at the first among my own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews, which knew me from the beginning, (if they would testify) that after the strictest sect of our religion I lived a pharisee.’ Having occasion afterwards to mention the same circumstances, in his epistle to the Galatians, he writes thus : *Ye have heard of my conversation in time past, how I profited in the Jews religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.* And to what an extraordinary pitch of excellence he had carried his morality, may be inferred from the follow-

ing short but solemn declaration, which was made in the presence of persons, who were very well competent to have convicted him of falsehood, had there been found the least blemish in his outward conduct: *Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God, unto this day.* Such was the early piety of St. Paul; and such was the righteousness, in which he trusted, when through zeal for the church and state, of which he was a member, he persecuted christians as disturbers of the public peace.

As we have seen the beautiful side of this apostle's early character, let us now consider his defects. As a member of the Jewish church, he was inspired with zeal, but that zeal was rigid and severe: as a member of society his manners were probably courteous, but on some occasions his behaviour was tyrannical and inhuman: in a word, he possessed the whole of religion, except those essential parts of it, *humility* and *charity*. Supercilious and impatient, he would bear no contradiction. Presuming upon his own sufficiency, he gave himself no time to compare his errors with truth: and hence, covering his cruelty with the specious name of zeal, he breathed out *threatnings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord*. He himself, speaking of this part of his character, makes the following humiliating confession. 'I was a blasphemer, and a persecutor and injurious. I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.'

Nevertheless, this rigid pharisee, who carried his devotion to bigotry, and his zeal to fury, had an upright heart in the sight of God. *I obtained mercy*, says he after his conversion, *because I did it ignorantly in unbelief*, imagining, that when I persecuted the disciples of Jesus, I was opposing a torrent of the most dangerous errors.

Piety is that knowledge of God and the various relations he stands in to man, which leads us to adore, to love, and obey him, in public and in private. This great virtue is the first trait in the moral character of St. Paul; and it is absolutely

necessary to the christian character in general, since it is that parent of all virtues, to which God has given the promise of the present life, and of that, which is to come. But it is more particularly necessary to those, who consecrate themselves to the holy ministry; since being obliged, by their office, to exhibit before their flock an example of piety, if they themselves are destitute of godliness, they must necessarily act without any conformity to the sacred character, they have dared to assume.

If Quintilian, the heathen, has laid it down as a general principle, that it is impossible to become a *good orator*, without being a *good man*; surely no one will deny, that piety should be considered as the first qualification essential to a christian speaker. Mons. Roques, in his *Evangelical Pastor*, observes, that "The minister by his situation, is a man retired from the world, devoted to God, and called to evangelical holiness." "He is," continues he, "according to St. Paul, *a man of God*, i. e. a person entirely consecrated to God; a man of superior excellence; a man, in some sense divine: and to answer, in any degree, the import of this appellation, it is necessary, that his piety should be illustrious, solid, and universal." Without doubt this pious author had collected these beautiful ideas from the writings of St. Paul, who thus addresses Titus upon the same subject: 'A minister must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre: but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate: holding fast the faithful word, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince, the gainsayers. He must use sound speech, that cannot be condemned: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity; that he, who is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of him.'

A pastor without piety disgraces the holy profession, which he has made choice of, most probably from the same temporal motives, which influence others to embrace the study of the law, or the profession of arms. If those, who were called to serve tables, were to be *men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom*, it is evident, that the same dispositions and graces should be possessed, in a more eminent degree, by those, who are called to minister in holy things. *When thou art converted*, said Christ to Peter, *strengthen thy brethren.*

No sight can be more absurd, than that of an impenitent infidel engaged in calling sinners to repentance and faith. Even the men of the world look down with contempt upon a minister of this description, whose conduct perpetually contradicts his discourses, and who, while he is pressing upon others the necessity of holiness, indulges himself in the pleasures of habitual sin. Such a preacher, far from being instrumental in effecting true conversions among his people, will generally lead his hearers into the same hypocrisy, which distinguishes his own character: since that, which was said in ancient times, holds equally true in the present day, *Like people, like priest*. Lukewarm pastors make careless christians; and the wordly preacher leads his worldly hearers as necessarily into carnal security, as a blind guide conducts the blind into the ditch. And to this unhappy source may be traced the degenerate manners of the present age, the reproach under which our holy religion labours, and the encreasing triumphs of infidelity.

The natural man, saith St. Paul, receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. Now, if a minister, who is destitute of scriptural piety is counted unable to comprehend the doctrines of the gospel, how much less is he able to publish and explain them? And if those, who live according to the vain customs of the world, have not the righteousness of the pharisees, with what propriety can they be called, I will not say, *true ministers*, but even *pious deists*?

Though every candidate for the sacred ministry may not be in circumstances to declare, with St. Paul, *I have lived in all good conscience before God unto this day*; yet all who aspire to that important office, should, at least, be able to say with sincerity; *Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence, toward God and toward man.* Such were the morals and the conduct of a Socrates and an Epictetus: and worshippers like these, *coming from the east and from the west, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, while the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness.*

TRAIT II.

HIS CHRISTIAN PIETY.

IT has been made sufficiently plain, under the preceding article, that St. Paul was possessed of a good degree of piety from his very infancy. Having been brought up in the fear of God by his father, who is supposed to have been a zealous pharisee, he was afterwards instructed at the feet of Gamaliel, a pious doctor of the Law, to whose wisdom and moderation St. Luke has borne an honourable testimony. And so greatly had he profited in his youth by these inestimable privileges, that *touching the righteousness, which is of the Law*, he was *blameless*. But this piety was not sufficient under the new Testament.

To become a christian, and a true minister of the Gospel, it is necessary to have, not only the piety of a *sincere deist*, or of a *devout Jew*, as St. Paul had before his conversion, but also those higher degrees of piety, which that apostle possessed, after he had received the gift of deep repentance toward God and living faith in Jesus Christ. The basis of piety, among the Jews, was a knowledge of God, as *Creator, Protector, and Rewarder*; but, in order to have christian piety, it is necessary, that to this knowledge of God, as *Creator, &c.* should be added that of God the *Redeemer*, God the *Destroyer of all our evils*, God our *Saviour*; or in other words, the knowledge of Jesus Christ. *This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

But who can truly *know*, I will not say *his Saviour*, but merely his *need* of a Saviour, without first becoming acquainted with his own heart, and receiving there a lively impression both of his sin and his danger? A student in theology, who has not yet submitted himself to the maxim of Solon, *know thyself*; and who has never mourned under that sense of our natural ignorance and depravity, which forced Socrates to confess the want of a *divine instructor*;—a candidate, I say, who is wholly unacquainted with himself, instead of eagerly soliciting the imposition of hands, should rather seek after a true understanding of the censure, which Christ once passed

upon the pastor of the Laodicean church : *Thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.*

If a young man steals into the ministry without this knowledge, far from being able to preach the Gospel, he will not even comprehend that *first* evangelical principle, *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* And instead of devoutly offering up to God the prayers of an assembled congregation, he will constantly begin the sacred office by an act of hypocrisy, in saying—*Almighty Father, we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have offended against thy holy Laws. There is no health in us. But Thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners.* After making these confessions in public, when he is interrogated in private respecting that *misery and condemnation*, under a sense of which he so lately appeared to groan, he will not scruple immediately to contradict, what he has so plainly expressed : thus discovering to every impartial observer, that when he prays in public, he prays, either as a child, who understands not what he repeats ; or as a deceiver, who appears to believe, what he really gives no credit to, and that merely for the sake of enjoying the pension of a minister, and his rank in society.

What is here said of ministers, is equally applicable to christians in general. If any one dares to approach the sacramental table, there to make a profession of being redeemed from eternal death by the death of Christ, before he is deeply humbled under a sense of the condemnation due to his sin : can such a one be said to perform an act of piety ? Is he not rather engaged in performing an act of vain ceremony and presumptuous dissimulation in the presence of God ? The feigned humiliation of such a communicant, would resemble that of a rebel subject, who, without any consciousness that his actions had merited death, should cast himself, from motives of interest, at the feet of his prince, and affect to rejoice under a sense of that undeserved clemency, which permitted him to live. All our professions of faith in Christ are tinctured, more or less, with hypocrisy ; unless preceded by that painful conviction of past errors, whence alone can cordially flow those humiliating confessions, with which we are accustomed to begin our sacred services.

The true christian, and consequently, the true minister, is constrained to cry out, with St. Paul, when he discovered

the purity of Jehovah's Law and the greatness of his own guilt : *The law is spiritual*, and demands an obedience correspondent to its nature ; ' but I am carnal, sold under sin : for what I would, that I do not ; but what I hate, that I do. I know, that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. O wretched man, that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?'

In this manner the true penitent, weary and heavy laden, makes his approaches to the Saviour ; and while he continues to implore his grace and favour, an incomprehensible change takes place in his soul. His groans are suddenly turned into songs of deliverance, and he is enabled to adopt the triumphant language of the great apostle : ' I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord ; for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. There is therefore now no condemnation to them, which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.'

Every true follower of Christ, therefore, and especially, every true minister of the Gospel, has really experienced the evil of sin, the inability of man to free himself from such evil, and the efficacy of that remedy, which endued the first christians with so extraordinary a degree of purity, power, and joy. And in testimony of the virtue of this sovereign remedy, every such follower has a right to declare with his happy predecessors, ' We give thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light : who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son ; in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.'

When a preacher is possessed of *christian piety* ; or in other words, when he has made his peace with God, by that *deep repentance* which enables us to die unto sin, and by that *living faith*, which unites us to Christ, he naturally invites the world to embrace a Saviour, who has wrought for him so wonderful a deliverance : and this invitation he enforces with all the power and warmth, which must ever accompany deep sensibility. After having believed with the heart to the obtaining of righteousness, he is prepared to confess with his lips, and to testify of his salvation : crying out, as sincerely as Simeon, but in a sense far more compleat, *Lord, now lettest*

Thou thy servant depart in peace ; for according to thy word, mine eyes have seen thy salvation. “ Here,” says Mr. Osterwald, “ may be applied, what was spoken by our blessed “ Lord—*A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things.* Erasmus speaks the same thing “ —*Nihil potentius ad extandos bonos affectus, quam piorum “ affectuum fontem habere in pectore.* Si vis me flere, dolendum est, &c. i. e. following the idea of the author, You “ will never win others over to a religious life, unless you “ yourself are first possessed of piety. This inspires thoughts, “ dispositions, and words, which nothing else can produce. “ It is this, that animates the voice, the gesture, and every “ action of the christian preacher. When he is thus grounded in piety, it is difficult to conceive with what facility, and “ with what success he labours, still enjoying an unspeakable “ sweetness in himself. Then it is, that he is truly sensible “ of his vocation ; then he speaks in the cause of God, and “ then only he is in a proper situation to affect others.”

It appeared so necessary to the fathers, who composed the synod of Berne, that every minister should be possessed of solid piety, that they believed it impossible for a man to be a good catechist without it. After recommending it to pastors to explain among the youth, the Lord's prayer and the Apostles' creed, they add : “ *This will be abundantly more “ effectual, if first of all, we are careful that Jesus Christ may “ arise in our own hearts.* The fire, with which we should “ then be animated, would soon stir up and warm the docile “ minds of children. Otherwise, that which reason alone “ draws from books, and is taught by other men, is no more “ than a human work, and will be ineffectual, till the great “ master, the Holy Spirit itself, becomes of the party, creating, renewing, and regenerating to a celestial and eternal “ life.”

REFLECTIONS

Upon the second trait of the character of St. Paul.

1. **T**HE *experimental* knowledge of our misery as sinners, and of our salvation, as sinners redeemed, is the portion of every believer under the Gospel. If we are destitute of this twofold knowledge, we are yet in a state of danger-

ous ignorance, and are denominated christians in vain : for *christian humility* has its source in the knowledge of our corruption, as christian charity flows from a knowledge of the great salvation, which Christ has procured for us : and if these two graces are not resident in our hearts, our religion is but the shadow of christianity.

2. As there are some persons, whose physiognomy is strongly marked, and who have something peculiarly striking in the whole turn of their countenance ; so there are some, the traits of whose moral character are equally striking, and whose conversion is distinguished by uncommon circumstances. Such was the apostle Paul. But a train of wonderful occurrences is by no means necessary to conversion. For example—It is not necessary, that all believers should be actually cast to the earth : or that groaning beneath the weight of their sins, and under the conviction of a twofold blindness, they should continue in prayer for three days and nights, without either eating or drinking. But it is absolutely necessary, that they should be sensible of an extreme sorrow for having offended a gracious God ; that they should condemn themselves and their vices by an unfeigned repentance ; and that confessing the depravity of their whole heart, they should abandon themselves to that sincere distress which refuses all consolation, except that which is from above. Neither is it necessary, that they should hear a voice from heaven, that they should see a light brighter than the Sun, or behold, in a vision, the minister chosen to bring them consolation in the name of the Lord Jesus. But it is absolutely necessary, that they should hear the word of God, that they should be illuminated by the Gospel, and receive directions from any messenger sent for their relief ; till, placing their whole confidence in God through a gracious Redeemer, they feel a new and heavenly nature produced within them. This *sincere repentance* and this *living faith*, or, which is the same thing, this *christian piety*, is strictly required of every believer under the new Testament.

3. *Christian piety* constitutes the great difference, that is observed between true ministers and unworthy pastors. The latter preach, chiefly, either in order to obtain benefices, or to preserve them ; or, perhaps, to relieve one another in the discharge of those duties, which they esteem heavy and painful. But the desire of communicating to sinners that spiritual knowledge, which is *more precious than rubies*, is the

grand motive for preaching with the true ministers of God. They publish Christ, like St. Paul, from sentiment and inclination; exposing themselves even to persecution on account of preaching the Gospel, like those faithful Evangelists, who, when commanded to teach no more in the name of Jesus, answered with equal respect and resolution; 'Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things, which we have seen and heard.'

4. It is worthy of observation, that St. Paul supplicates not only for all public teachers, but for every private believer in the church, the highest degree of grace and christian experience. *I cease not*, saith he to the Ephesians, 'to make mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know, what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance, in the saints: and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward, who believe.' And the same end, which this apostle proposed to himself in his private supplications, St. John also proposed to himself in writing his public epistles—'That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.' As though he had said, we write, if haply we may excite you to seek after higher degrees of faith, charity and obedience, *that being rooted and grounded in love, ye may be able to comprehend with all saints, the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge; that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God.* The attentive reader will easily perceive, that what was once the subject of St. Paul's most ardent prayer, is at this day considered, by nominal christians in general, as a proper subject for the most pointed raillery.

5. Those ministers, who are not yet furnished with christian experience, and who are not seeking after it, as *the pearl of great price*, held out to us in the Gospel, are not yet truly converted to the christian faith: and (I repeat it after Mr. Oostervald) being destitute of *christian piety*, far from being in circumstances to preach the Gospel, they are not able even

to comprehend it. These are they, 'who having a form of godliness, deny the power thereof.' And the greatest eulogium, that can be pronounced upon such characters, is that, with which St. Paul honoured the unbelieving zealots of his time : 'I bear them record, that they have a zeal for God ;' but that zeal is unaccompanied with any true knowledge, either of man's weakness, or the Redeemer's power : 'For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one, that believeth.'

6. Whoever has not experienced that conviction of sin, and that repentance, which is described by St. Paul in the seventh chapter of his epistle to the Romans, though, like Nicodemus, he may be a *doctor in Israel*, yet he shall never see the kingdom of God. Totally carnal, and satisfied to continue so, he neither understands nor desires that regeneration, which the Gospel proposes and insists upon. He endeavours not to fathom the sense of those important words : 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' He considers those, who are born of the spirit as rank enthusiasts, and disdains to make any serious enquiry respecting the foundation of their hope. If his acquaintance with the letter of the scripture did not restrain him, he would tauntingly address the artless question of Nicodemus to every minister, who preaches the doctrine of regeneration—*How can a man be born, when he is old ? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born ?* And unless he was withheld by a sense of politeness, he would rudely repeat to every zealous follower of St. Paul the ungracious expression of Festus—'Thou art beside thyself ; much mystic learning doth make thee mad.'

7. On the contrary, a minister, who is distinguished by the second trait of the character of St. Paul, at the same time proportionably possesses every disposition, necessary to form an evangelical pastor : since it is not possible for *christian piety* to exist without the brilliant light of *truth*, and the burning zeal of *charity*. And every minister, who has this light and this love, is enriched with those two powerful resources, which enabled the first christians to act as citizens of heaven, and the first ministers as ambassadors of Christ.

TRAIT III.

*HIS INTIMATE UNION WITH
CHRIST BY FAITH.*

I AM come, said the good shepherd, *that my sheep might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the light of the world. I am the way, the truth, and the life. I am the vine; ye are the branches.* The faithful minister understands the signification of these mysterious expressions. He walks in this *way*, he follows this *light*, he embraces this *truth*, and enjoys this *life*, in all its rich abundance. Constantly united to his Lord, by a humble faith, a lively hope, and an ardent charity, he is enabled to say, with St. Paul; ‘The love of Christ constraineth me; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they, which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him, who died for them, and rose again. We are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. Knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; but liveth unto God: we likewise reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.’

This living faith is the source, from whence all the sanctity of the christian is derived, and all the power of the true minister: it is the medium, through which that sap of grace and consolation, those streams of peace and joy, are perpetually flowing, which enrich the believing soul, and make it fruitful in every good work: or, to speak without a metaphor, from this powerful grace proceeds that love of God and man, which influences us to think and act, either as members, or as ministers, of Jesus Christ. The character of the christian is determined according to the strength or weakness of his faith. If the faith of St. Paul had been weak or wavering, his portrait would have been unworthy of our contemplation: he would necessarily have fallen into doubt and discouragement; he might probably have sunk into sin, as

St. Peter plunged into the sea; he must, sooner or later, have lost his spiritual vigour; and have made the same appearance in the church, as those ministers and christians, who are influenced by the maxims of the world. The effects of faith are still truly mysterious, though our Lord has explained them in as intelligible a manner, as their nature will permit. ‘He that abideth in me,’ by a living faith, ‘and in whom I abide,’ by the light of my word and the power of my spirit, ‘the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If any man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and being withered, is cast into the fire and burned. Herein is my father glorified, that,’ united to me as the branches to the vine, ‘ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.’

Penetrated with these great truths, and daily cleaving more firmly to his living head, the true minister expresses what the natural man cannot receive, and what few pastors of the present age are able to comprehend, though St. Paul not only experienced it in his own heart, but openly declares it in the following remarkable passage: *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; yet, not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life, which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*



TRAIT IV.

HIS EXTRAORDINARY VOCATION TO THE HOLY MINISTRY, AND IN WHAT THAT MINISTRY CHIEFLY CONSISTS.

EVERY professor of christianity is acquainted with the honour, which our Lord conferred upon the apostle Paul, in not only calling him to a participation of the christian faith, but by appointing him also to publish the everlasting Gospel. A just sense of this double honour penetrated the heart of that apostle with the most lively gratitude—I give thanks, saith he, ‘to Christ Jesus our Lord, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious. But I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbe-

lief: and the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant in me, with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus. Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them, which should hereafter believe on him to everlasting life. The evangelical ministry to which St. Paul was immediately called, is in general the same, through every age enlightened by the Gospel, and consists in publishing the truth after such a manner, that the wicked may be converted, and the faithful edified. The commission which the great apostle received from Christ, contains, essentially, nothing more than the acknowledged duty of every minister of the Gospel. Leave out the miraculous appearance of our Lord; pass over the circumstance of a commission given in an extraordinary manner; substitute the word *sinners* for that of *gentiles*, and instead of *Jews*, read *hypocritical professors*; and you will perceive, that, with these immaterial alterations, the commission of St. Paul is the commission of every faithful minister in the church. Observe the tenor of it. In person, or by my ambassadors, in a manner either extraordinary, or ordinary, ‘I appoint thee a minister, and a witness of those things which thou hast seen, or experienced, and of those things, in the which I will appear to thee; and I will deliver thee from the hands of the people, and from the gentiles,’ i. e. from the hands of hypocritical professors, and from ignorant sinners, ‘unto whom I now send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from the darkness of error, to the light of truth, and from the power of Satan to God.’ i. e. from sin, which is the image of Satan, to holiness, which is the image of God, *that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them, which are sanctified, by faith that is in me.* Such was the office to which St. Paul was appointed, more especially among the gentile nations; and such, without doubt, is the office of every pastor, at least, within the limits of his particular parish. As for taking the ecclesiastical habit, reading over some pages of a liturgy, solemnizing marriages, baptizing infants, keeping registers, and receiving stipends, these things are merely accidental: and every minister should be able to say, with St. Paul, *Christ sent me not, principally, to baptize, but to preach the Gospel.*

It is evident from various passages in the different offices of our church, that our pious reformers were unanimously of

opinion, that Christ himself appoints, and, in some sort, inspires all true pastors ; that He commits the flock to their keeping, and that their principal care is the same with that of the first evangelists, namely, 'the conversion of souls.' And truly, the same Lord, who appointed his disciples as *apostles* or *ocular witnesses* of his resurrection, has also appointed others as *pastors*, or 'witnesses of a secondary order,' and *suffragans* of the first evangelists. If the witnesses of a higher order were permitted to see Christ after his resurrection, those of a secondary order have felt the efficacy of his resurrection, *being raised together with him*, or regenerated through the reception of a *lively hope, by the rising again of Christ from the dead*. So that every true minister, who bears his testimony to the truths of the Gospel, whether it be from the pulpit, or before tribunals, is supported by his own particular experience of Christ's resurrection, as well as by a *conviction* founded upon the depositions of the first witnesses. Now this conviction, and this experience, are by no means confined to the ministering servants of God ; but the hearts of the faithful, in their several generations, have been influenced by them both ; if it be true, that they have constantly stood prepared, to seal with their blood these two important truths, *Jesus Christ died for our sins, and rose again for our justification*. Millions of the laity have been called to give this last proof of their faith, and, beyond all doubt, it is abundantly more difficult to bear testimony of the truth upon a scaffold, than from a pulpit.

If St. Paul and the other apostles are considered as persons of a rank far superior to ours, they themselves cry out, *O sirs ! we also are men of like passions with you*. If it be said, that God inspired the apostles with all the *wisdom and zeal* necessary to fulfil the duties of their high vocation ; it may be replied, that our churches implore for their established pastors the same *wisdom and zeal*, grounding such prayers upon the authority of many plain passages of Holy Scripture. 'Now unto him, that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all, that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end.'

Moreover, it is an error to suppose, that the apostles needed no augmentation of that divine light, by which spiritual objects are discerned. St. Paul who was favoured with an ex-

traordinary inspiration, and that sufficient to compose sacred books, in which infallibility is to be found, writes thus to believers: *Now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then shall I know, even as also I am known.* An humble, but happy confession! which, on the one hand, will not suffer us to be discouraged, when we are most sensible of our inadequate light; and teaches us, on the other, how necessary it is to make incessant application to the *Father of lights*: equally guarding us against the pride of some, who imagine themselves to have apprehended *all* the truth; and the wilful ignorance of others, who pronounce spiritual knowledge to be *altogether* unattainable.

Now if the apostle Paul could but imperfectly discern the depths of evangelical truth, and if *angels* themselves *desire to look into these things*; who can sufficiently wonder at the presumption of those men, who are so far persuaded of their own infallibility, that they regard all truths, which they are unable to fathom, as the mere reveries of fanaticism? But, turning our eyes at present from the pernicious error of these self-exalted christians, let us consider a subject, in which we are more interested, than in the extraordinary vocation of St. Paul to the holy ministry.

REFLECTIONS

Upon the ordinary vocation to the holy ministry.

THE *harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into his harvest.* Retaining in memory these remarkable words of our Lord, the conscientious man is incapable of thrusting himself into the holy ministry, without being first duly called thereto by the Lord of the harvest the great *Shepherd and Bishop of souls*.

The minister of the present age is not ordinarily called to the holy ministry, except by carnal motives, such as his own vanity, or his peculiar taste for a tranquil and indolent life. Perhaps his vocation to the ministry is principally from his father or mother, who have determined that their son shall enter into holy orders. Very frequently, if the candidate for holy orders had sincerity enough to discover the real inclination of his heart, he might make his submissions to the

dignitaries of our church, and say ; *Put me, I pray you, into one of the priest's offices that I may eat a piece of bread.*

It is not thus with the real believer, who consecrates himself to the holy ministry. He is not ignorant, that *Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest* : and he is perfectly assured, that no man has a right to take upon himself the sacerdotal dignity, *but he that is called of God*, either in an extraordinary manner, as Aaron and St. Paul, or, at least, in an ordinary manner, as Apollos and Timothy. As it is a matter of the utmost importance, to understand by what tokens this ordinary vocation to the holy ministry may be discovered, the following reflections upon so interesting a subject may not be altogether superfluous.

If a young man of virtuous manners is deeply penetrated with this humiliating truth,—*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.* If further, he is effectually convinced of this consolatory truth. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* If his natural talents have been strengthened by a liberal education ; if the pleasure of doing good is sweeter to him than all the pleasures of sense ; if the hope of *converting sinners from the error of their way*, occupies his mind more agreeably than the idea of acquiring all the advantages of fortune ; if the honour of publishing the Gospel, is superior, in his eyes, to the honour of becoming the ambassador of an earthly prince : In short, if by a desire, which springs from the fear of God, the love of Christ, and the concern he takes in the salvation of his neighbour, he is led to consecrate himself to the holy ministry ; if, in the order of providence, outward circumstances concur with his own designs ; and if he solicits the grace and assistance of God with greater eagerness than he seeks the outward vocation from his superiors in the church by the imposition of hands ; he may then satisfy himself, that the great High-Priest of the Christian profession has set him apart for the high office, to which he aspires.

When, after serious examination, any student in theology discovers in himself the necessary dispositions mentioned above ; then, having received imposition of hands, with faith and humility, from the pastors, who preside in the church, he may solidly conclude, that he has been favoured with the *ordinary vocation*. Hence, looking up to the source of the

important office, with which he is honoured, he can adopt with propriety the language of St. Paul: 'I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, for that he hath counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry. Though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me, yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel: for then I should be found unfaithful to my vocation. *God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ.* And, if he becomes not like that *wicked and slothful servant*, who refused to administer to the necessities of his master's household, he will be able at all times to say; 'Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

A person of this description, searching the depths of the human heart, of which he has acquired a competent knowledge by the study of his own, meditating with attention upon the proofs, and with humility upon the mysteries of our holy religion, giving himself up to the study of divine things, and above all, to prayer and to good works; such a pastor may reasonably hope to *grow in grace* and in the knowledge of that powerful Saviour, whom he earnestly proclaims to others. Nor is it probable that such a one will labour altogether in vain. Gradually instructed in the things, which concern the kingdom of God, he will become like the father of a family, bringing forth out of his treasures *things new and old*: and whether he speaks of the *old man*, the earthly nature, which he has *put off* with such extreme pain, or the *new man*, the heavenly nature, which he has *put on* with equal joy, he will speak with a conviction so powerful, and a persuasion so constraining, that the careless must necessarily be alarmed, and the faithful encouraged.

TRAIT V.

HIS ENTIRE DEVOTION TO JESUS CHRIST.

THE true christian called to become a disciple of the blessed Jesus, rather than refuse the offered privilege, renounces his all. If this token of devotion to Christ is discernable in the character of every true christian, it is still more conspicuous in the character of every true minister. Such a person, inwardly called by the grace of God to a state of discipleship with Christ, and outwardly consecrated to such a state by the imposition of hands, gives himself unreservedly up to the service of his condescending master. He withstands no longer that permanent command of our exalted Lord, to which his first disciples shewed so cheerful a submission, *Follow me*. Nor is he discouraged, while Christ continues, ‘If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. He, that loveth father and mother, son or daughter, more than me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life, for my sake, shall find it.’ If there be found any pastor who cannot adopt the solemn appeal of the first ministers of Christ, *Lo we have left all and followed Thee*, that man is in no situation to copy the example of his forerunners in the christian church, and is altogether unworthy the character he bears: since without this detachment from the world, and this devotion to the Son of God, he flatters himself in vain, that he is either a true minister, or a real member, of Jesus Christ.

Observe the declaration of one, whose attachment to his divine master deserves to be had in everlasting remembrance: ‘Those things which were gain to me, I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, having the righteousness which is of God by faith.’ *For none of us*, true christians or true ministers, ‘liveth to himself,

or dieth to himself: but whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord.'

Professing to be, either a minister, or a believer, of the Gospel, without this entire devotion to Jesus Christ, is to live in a state of the most dangerous hypocrisy: it is neither more nor less, than saying, Lord! Lord! without having a firm resolution to do, what our gracious master has commanded.

TRAIT VI.

HIS STRENGTH AND HIS ARMS.

THE ministers of the present age are furnished in a manner suitable to their design. As they are more desirous to *please* than to *convert* their hearers, so they are peculiarly anxious to embellish the inventions of a seducing imagination. They are continually seeking after the beauty of metaphors, the brilliancy of antitheses, the delicacy of description, the just arrangement of words, the aptness of gesture, the modulations of voice, and every other studied ornament of artificial eloquence. While the true minister, effectually convinced of the excellence of the Gospel, relies alone, for the effect of his public ministry, upon the force of truth, and the assistance of his divine master.

Observe the manner in which St. Paul expresses himself upon this subject; 'We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak. And I, brethren, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God: for I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong holds: casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.'

The true minister, following the example of St. Paul, after

having experienced the power of these victorious arms, exhorts every soldier of Christ to provide himself with the same spiritual weapons. ‘ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand. For we wrestle not merely against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, having on the breast-plate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace: above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And, that you may perform heroical service with these arms, pray always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit.’

So long as the faithful minister, or servant of Christ wears and wields these scriptural arms, he will be truly invincible. But no man can gird himself with these invisible weapons, except he *be born of the Spirit*; nor can any christian soldier employ them to good purpose, unless he be first endued with all that divine power, which flows from the love of God and man: he must feel, at least, some sparks of that fire of charity, which warmed the bosom of St. Paul, when he cried out—*Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ and of souls constraineth us.*

“ From the time, that the eyes of St. Paul were opened to “ a perception of the Gospel,” says Monsr. Romilly, pastor of a church in Geneva, “ we find him no longer the same “ person. He is another man, he is a new creature, who “ thinks no more but on Gospel-truths; who hears nothing, “ who breathes nothing but the Gospel; who speaks on “ no other subject, who attends to no other thing but the “ voice of the Gospel; who desires all the world to attend “ with him to the same voice, and wishes to communicate his “ transports to all mankind. From this happy period, neither “ the prejudices of flesh and blood, neither respect to man, “ nor the fear of death, nor any other consideration is able to

“ withstand him in his course. He moves on with serenity
 “ in a path sown thick with reproaches and pain. What has
 “ he to fear? He despises the maxims of the world, nay the
 “ world itself; its hatred as well as its favour, its joys as well
 “ as its sorrows, its meanness as well as its pomp. Time is
 “ no longer an object with him, nor is his œconomy regulated
 “ by it. He is superior to every thing; he is *immortal*.
 “ Though the universe arms itself against him, though hell
 “ opens its abysses, though affliction assaults him on every
 “ side, he stands immoveable in every storm, looking with
 “ contempt upon death, conscious that he can never die. Su-
 “ perior to all his enemies, he resists their united attempts
 “ with the arms of the Gospel, opposing to time and hell,
 “ eternity and heaven.”



TRAIT VII.

HIS POWER TO BIND, TO LOOSE, AND TO BLESS, IN THE NAME OF THE LORD.

THE armour of God, described in the preceding article, is common to all christians: but the true minister is girded with weapons of a peculiar temper. As a christian, his sword is the word of God in general; but, as a minister, it is *especially* those parts of the Gospel, by which he is invested with authority to preach the *word of God*, and to perform the functions of an ambassador of Jesus Christ. Go, said our blessed Master to his first disciples, *and preach the Gospel to every creature*. ‘He that believeth my doctrine shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned. All power is given unto me in Heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Verily, verily I say unto you, he, that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me; and he, that receiveth me, receiveth Him that sent me. Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, according to the spirit of my Gospel, shall be loosed in Heaven.’

Behold, from whence the ministers of Christ have authority to absolve true penitents, and to excommunicate obstinate sinners. An authority, which some have called *the power of the clergy*; a power, which unrighteous pastors so much abuse, and which the faithful never presume to exercise, but with the utmost solemnity: a power, which, nevertheless, belongs to them of divine right, and which can be denied them with no more reason, than *they* can refuse the sacramental cup to the people. Such, at least, is the judgment of many excellent and learned divines, among whom may be reckoned Mons. Ostervald, and Mons. Roques. It may however be enquired, with propriety in this place—Can ecclesiastics be justified in still making use of their authority in these respects, unless they do it with prudence and impartiality? And would it not become them to exercise the ecclesiastic discipline, in an especial manner, upon unworthy pastors, following the maxim of St. Peter; *The time is come, that judgment must begin at the house of God?*

Invested with the authority, which Christ has conferred upon him, the true minister is prepared to denounce the judgments of God against obstinate sinners, to console the dejected, and to proclaim the promises of the Gospel to every sincere believer, with an energy unknown to the worldly pastor, and with a power, which is accompanied by the seal of the living God. Thus, when such a minister clearly discerns the profound malice of another Elymas, he is permitted to say, with the authority of an ambassador of Jesus Christ; ‘O full of all subtilty, and all mischief, thou child of the Devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? Behold! the hand of the Lord shall be upon thee.’ But the true minister is careful never to abuse this awful power. ‘We can do nothing,’ says St. Paul, ‘against the truth, but for the truth: I write these things being absent, lest being present, I should use sharpness, according to the power, which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.’ The denunciation of vengeance is to the minister of Christ, what the execution of judgment is to the God of love, his painful and *strange work*.

The good pastor, conscious that the ministration of mercy exceeds in glory the ministration of condemnation, places his chief glory and pleasure in spreading abroad the blessings

of the new covenant. He knows, that the promises are *yea*, and *amen*, in that beneficent Redeemer, who gave the following charge to his first missionaries : *Into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon him : if not, it shall turn to you again.* The wishes and prayers of a minister, who acts and speaks in conformity to the intent of this benign charge, really communicates the peace and benediction of his gracious master to those, who are meet for their reception : and according to the degree of his faith, he can write to the faithful of distant churches, with the confidence of St. Paul—I am persuaded that *when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ.* Whenever he salutes his brethren, his pen or his lips become the channel of those evangelical wishes, which flow from his heart : ‘ Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.’ Thus the true minister approves himself a member of the *royal priesthood*, a priest of the most high, *after the order of Melchisedec*, who blessed the Patriarch Abraham : or rather, a ministring servant of the son of God, who was manifested in the flesh, that *in him all the families of the earth might be blessed.*

Great God ! grant that the whole company of christian pastors may be men after thine own heart. Leaving to the ignorant those compliments, which a slavish dependence has invented, may thy ministers perpetually carry about them the love, the gravity, and the apostolic authority, which belong to their sacred character. May all the benedictions, which thou hast commissioned them to pronounce, cause them still to be received, in every place as *angels of God.* Far from being despised as hypocrites, shunned as troublesome guests, or feared as men of a covetous and tyrannical disposition, may that moment always be esteemed a happy one, in which they enter any man’s habitation : and whenever they make their appearance upon these charitable occasions, may those, who compose the family, each seeking to give the first salute, cry out—*How beautiful are the feet of them, that preach the Gospel of peace.*

The power of pronouncing *exhortations* and *blessings* is not the exclusive privilege of pastors, but belongs to all experi-

enced believers. The Patriarchs had a right to bless their children ; and Jacob blessed not only his sons and grandsons, but also the king of Egypt himself. If the followers of Christ, then, are deprived of this consolatory power, the children of ancient Israel were more highly privileged than the members of the christian church, who are called, nevertheless, to receive more precious benedictions, and to be, as our Lord expresses it, ‘ the salt of the earth, and the light of the world.’ When St. Paul writes to believers: ‘ Desire spiritual gifts; but rather that ye may prophesy : for he that prophesieth, speaketh unto men to edification, to exhortation, and comfort :’ he doubtless excites them to ask of God that overflowing charity, and that patriarchal authority, without which, it is impossible for them fully to comply with the following apostolic injunctions—*Bless, and curse not—knowing that ye are thereunto called that ye should inherit a blessing,*—and, without a high degree of which they cannot sincerely obey those distinguished precepts of our blessed Lord—*Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them, which despitefully use you and persecute you.*

TRAIT VIII.

THE EARNESTNESS WITH WHICH HE BEGAN, AND CONTINUED TO FILL UP THE DUTIES OF HIS VOCATION.

THE true penitent having renounced himself for the honour of following his exalted Lord, stands faithfully in his own vocation, whether it be secular or ecclesiastic. He is prepared, upon all occasions, to perform the will of his gracious Master : and if he is commissioned to act as a minister of Christ, after furnishing himself with the whole *armour of God*, he will expose himself, without fear, to the most threatening dangers, that he may compel sinners to come in to the marriage-supper of the Lamb. ‘ I rejoice, saith St. Paul, in my sufferings for the body of Christ, which is the church, whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God, which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God ; even the mystery, which hath been hid from ages, but which is now made manifest to his saints : to whom

God would make known, what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the gentiles ; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory ; whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus ; whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily. For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for all those among whom the word of God is preached, that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father and of Christ ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.’

Such are the great ideas, which the Apostle Paul entertained of the ministry he had received : and observe the assiduity, with which he discharged the duties of so important an office—*Ye know*, says he, speaking to the pastors, to whom he committed the care of one of his flocks ‘ from the first day, that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations : and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves ; for I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves, unfaithful pastors, enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Therefore watch and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.’ In every place he discharged the obligations of a minister with the same application and zeal, travelling from city to city, and from church to church, bearing testimony to *the redemption that is in Jesus*, and declaring the great truths of the Gospel. When the synagogues were shut against him, he preached in the schools of philosophers, upon the sea-shore, on shipboard, and even in prisons : and while he dwelt a prisoner in his own house at Rome, ‘ he received all, that came in unto him, to whom he expounded and testified the Kingdom of

God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the Law of Moses and out of the Prophets, from morning till evening.’

Thus the Son of God himself once publicly laboured for the conversion of sinners, sometimes going through *all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel*; and at other times instructing the multitudes, who either followed him into the fields, or resorted to the house, where he lodged: *for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.* And when through the pleasure of bringing the Samaritans acquainted with spiritual truth, he disregarded the necessities of nature, his disciples requesting him to partake of the food they had prepared, received from him this memorable answer: *I have meat to eat, that ye know not of—my meat is to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work*, that is, to enlighten and save sinners.

Thus St. Paul was diligently and daily occupied in fulfilling the duties of his apostolic vocation; and thus every minister of the Gospel is called to labour in his appointed sphere. It remains to be known, whether all who do not labour according to their ability, are not condemned by the following general rule; *if any will not work neither should he eat*: For these words signify, applied to the present case, that they who will not labour as pastors, should by no means be permitted to eat the bread of pastors; an evangelical precept this, which deserves the strictest attention, as the bread of pastors is, in some sort, sacred bread, since it is that, which the piety of the public has set apart for the support of those, who have abandoned every worldly pursuit, that they might dedicate themselves freely and fully to the service of the church.

TRAIT IX.

THE MANNER IN WHICH HE DIVIDED HIS TIME BETWEEN PRAYER, PREACHING, AND THANKSGIVING.

THE minister of the present age is but seldom engaged in publishing to his people the truths of the Gospel; and still more rarely in supplicating for them the possession of

those blessings, which the Gospel proposes. It is chiefly before men, that he lifts up his hands, and affects to pour out a prayer from the fulness of his heart ; while the true minister divides his time between the two important and refreshing occupations of preaching and prayer ; by the former making a public offer of divine grace to his hearers, and by the latter, soliciting for them in secret the experience of that grace. Such was the manner of the blessed Jesus himself, who after having reproved his disciples for the low degree of their faith, retired either into gardens, or upon mountains, praying that their *faith might not fail*. The good pastor, who constantly imitates the example of his divine master, is prepared to adopt the following language of St. Paul, in addressing the flock, upon which he is immediately appointed to attend : ‘ For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man ; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be filled with all the fulness of God. And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment ; that ye may approve things, that are excellent ; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.’ By prayers like these, the Apostle Paul was accustomed to water, without ceasing, the heavenly seed, which he had so widely scattered through the vineyard of his Lord, manifesting an increasing attachment to those among whom he had at any time published the tidings of salvation, and breathing out in all his epistles to distant churches, the most earnest desire that God would *fulfil in them all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power ; that the name of the Lord Jesus Christ might be glorified in them, and they in him*.

Pastors, who pray thus for their flocks, pray not in vain. Their fervent petitions are heard ; sinners are converted, the faithful are edified, and thanksgiving is shortly joined to supplication. Thus the same apostle—‘ I thank my God always on your behalf for the grace of God, which is given you by Jesus Christ ; that in every thing ye are enriched by

him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge. So that ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Having heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and your love unto all the saints, I cease not to give thanks for you.'

Worldly ministers have no experience of the holy joy, that accompanies these secret sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving. But this can by no means be considered as matter of astonishment. Is their attachment to Christ as sincere as that of his faithful ministers? Are they as solicitous for the salvation of their hearers? Do they teach and preach with equal zeal? Do they pray with the same ardour and perseverance?



TRAIT X.

THE FIDELITY, WITH WHICH HE ANNOUNCED THE SEVERE THREATENINGS, AND CONSOLATORY PROMISES OF THE GOSPEL.

THE worldly minister has neither the courage, nor the tenderness of the true pastor. He is fearful of publishing those truths, which are calculated to alarm the careless sinner; and he knows not, in what manner to apply the promises of the Gospel, for the relief of those, who mourn. If ever he attempts to descant upon the consolatory truths of the Gospel, he only labours to explain, what is nearly unintelligible to himself; and all his discourses on subjects of this nature are void of that earnest persuasion, and that unction of love, which characterize the ministers of Christ. On the other hand, his dread of giving offence will not suffer him to address sinners of every rank, with the holy boldness of the Prophet Samuel: 'If ye will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall the hand of the Lord be against you. If ye still do wickedly ye shall be consumed.' The faithful pastor, on the contrary, conscious that the harshest truths of the Gospel are as necessary, as they are offensive, courageously insists upon them, in the manner of St. Paul—'Thinkest thou, O man, that doest such things, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Know this, that after thy hardness and impe-

nitent heart thou treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God : for indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish shall be upon every soul of man, that doeth evil. If every transgression under the first covenant received a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them, that heard him. This ye know, that no unclean person, nor covetous man hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God : let no man deceive you with vain words ; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh : for if they escaped not, who refused him, that spake on earth,' viz. the prophet Moses ; ' much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him, that speaketh from Heaven,' viz. The Saviour Jesus Christ. ' Wherefore let us serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear ; for our God is a consuming fire.'

But though the true minister courageously announces the most severe declarations of the word to the unbelieving and the impenitent ; yet he is never so truly happy, as when he invites the poor in spirit to draw forth the riches of grace from the treasury of God's everlasting love. *God hath not*, saith St. Paul, ' appointed us to wrath ; but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Ye are not come unto the mount, that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest. But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, and having an High Priest over the House of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith. If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. He, that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth : who is he,

that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.'

When these exhilarating declarations are found insufficient to revive the hearts of the contrite, the evangelical preacher fails not to multiply them, in the most sympathizing and affectionate manner. *I say unto you*, continues he, 'all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: for the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. And by him all, who believe, are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. There is therefore now no condemnation to them, which are in Christ Jesus: for where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.'

Such are the cordials, which the faithful evangelist administers to those, who are weary and heavy laden: precious cordials, which the worldly pastor can never effectually apply; which he either employs out of season, or renders useless by such additions of his own, as are contrary to the spirit of the Gospel.



TRAIT. XI.

HIS PROFOUND HUMILITY.

THERE is no evil disposition of the heart, with which the clergy are so frequently reproached, as *pride*. And it is with reason, that we oppose this sinful temper, especially when it appears in pastors, since it is so entirely contrary to the spirit of the Gospel, that the apostle Paul emphatically terms it, *The condemnation of the Devil*.

There is no amiable disposition, which our LORD more strongly recommended to his followers, than lowliness of mind. From his birth to his death, he gave himself a striking example of the most profound humility, joined to the most ardent charity. After having washed the feet of his first disciples, i. e. after he had taken the place of a slave at their feet, he addressed them as follows—'Know ye, what I have done unto you? Ye call me Master, and Lord: and ye say well: for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one ano-

ther's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord: neither he, that is sent, greater than he that sent him.' Again he says to the same effect—'Ye know, that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they, that are great, exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister: and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.'

Real christianity is the school of humble charity, in which every true minister can say, with Christ, according to his growth in grace, *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.* And unhappy will it be for those, who, reversing christianity, say, by their example, which is more striking than all their discourses, 'Learn of us to be fierce and revengeful, at the expence of peace both at home and abroad.' They, who receive the stipends of ministers, while they are thus endeavouring to subvert the religion, they profess to support, render themselves guilty, not only of hypocrisy, but of a species of sacrilege.

It is supposed, that St. Peter had the pre-eminence among the apostles, at least by his age: it is certain, that he spake in the name of the other apostles; that he first confessed Christ in two public orations; that our Lord conferred particular favours upon him; that he was permitted to be one of the three witnesses of his Master's transfiguration and agony; and that, on the day of Pentecost, he proved the power of his apostolic commission, by introducing three thousand souls at once into the kingdom of Christ. Far, however, from arrogating, upon these accounts, a spiritual supremacy over his brethren, he assumed no other title but that, which was given in common to all his fellow labourers in the ministry; 'The elders, which are among you, says he, I exhort, who am also an elder: Feed the flock of God, which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind: neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.' A piece of advice this, which is too much neglected by those prelates, who distinguish themselves from their brethren, yet more by

an antichristian pride, than by those ecclesiastical dignities to which they have made their way by the intrigues of ambition.

All pastors should seek after humility with so much the greater concern, as some among them, seduced with the desire of distinguishing themselves as persons of eminence in the church, after making certain ecclesiastical laws contrary to the word of God, have become persecutors of those, who refused submission to their tyrannical authority. Observe here the injustice of some modern philosophers, who misrepresenting the christian religion, a religion which breathes nothing but humility and love, set it forth as the cause of all the divisions, persecutions, and massacres, which have ever been fomented or perpetrated by its corrupt professors. Disasters, which, far from being the produce of real christianity, have their principal source in the vices of a supercilious, uncharitable, and antichristian clergy.

The church will always be exposed to these imputations, till every ecclesiastic shall imitate St. Paul, as he imitated Christ. That apostle, ever anxious to tread in the steps of his divine Master, was peculiarly distinguished by his humility to God and man. Ever ready to confess his own native poverty, and to magnify the riches of grace, he cries out—*Who is sufficient for these things?* who is properly qualified to discharge all the functions of the holy ministry? 'Such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the new Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth: but God that giveth the increase. I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle; but by the grace of God I am what I am. God hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ: but we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.'

If the humility of St. Paul is strikingly evident in these

remarkable passages, it is still more strongly expressed in those that follow. ‘Ye see, brethren, that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty ; and base things of the world, and things, which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things, that are : that no flesh should glory in his presence. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, who am nothing, who am the chief of sinners, is this grace given, that I should preach the unfearchable riches of Christ.’

Reader, if thou hast that opinion of thyself, which is expressed in the foregoing passages, thou art an humble christian. Thou canst truly profess thyself the servant of all those who salute thee ; thou art such already by thy charitable intentions, and art seeking occasions of demonstrating, by actual services, that thy tongue is the organ, not of an insidious politeness, but of a sincere heart. Like a true disciple of Christ, who concealed himself, when the multitude would have raised him to a throne, and who presented himself, when they came to drag him to his cross, thou hast a sacred pleasure in humbling thyself before God and man, and art anxious, without hypocrisy or affectation, to take the lowest place among thy brethren.

The humble christian, convinced of his wants and his weakness, feels it impossible to act like those proud and bashful poor, who will rather perish in their distress, than solicit the assistance of their brethren. St. Paul had nothing of this false modesty about him. Penetrated with a deep sense of his own unworthiness and insufficiency, after imploring for himself the gracious assistance of God, he thus humbly solicits the prayers of all the faithful : ‘Brethren, pray for us. I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together in your prayers for me. Pray always for all saints ; and for me, that utterance may be given me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds : that therein I may speak boldly as I ought to speak : You also continuing to help by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us

by the means of many persons, thanks may be given on our behalf.'

Thus humility, or *poverty of spirit*, which is set forth by Christ, as the first beatitude, leads us, by prayer, to all the benedictions of the Gospel, and to that lively gratitude, which gives birth to thanksgiving and joy. Lovely humility ! penetrate the hearts of all christians, animate every pastor, give peace to the church, and happiness to the universe.



TRAIT XII.

THE INGENUOUS MANNER, IN WHICH HE ACKNOWLEDGED AND REPAIRED HIS ERRORS.

IT is difficult for a proud man to confess himself in an error : but they who are possessed of humility and love, can make such acknowledgments with cheerfulness. When St. Paul was called upon to justify his conduct before the tribunal of the Jews, the same spirit of resentment which animated his persecutors, suddenly seized upon the more passionate of his judges, when the High Priest, still more exasperated than the rest, commanded those, who stood near Paul *to smite him on the mouth*. It was in that moment of surprize and indignation, that the apostle, unacquainted with the author of so indecent a proceeding, and not imagining, that the president of an august assembly could so far forget his own dignity, as to act with so reprehensible an impetuosity, gave this sharp reply to so unjust an order ; *God shall smite thee thou whited wall : for sittest thou to judge me after the Law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the Law ?* Immediately those, who stood by, reproaching him with his apparent disrespectful carriage, enquired with the utmost indignation, *Revilest thou God's high Priest ?* Here the apostle far from justifying his own conduct, in resenting the severity of a judge, who hath degraded himself by an act of the most flagrant injustice, immediately acknowledged his error : and lest the example he had given should encourage any person to withhold the respect due to a magistrate, still more respectable by his office than blameable by his rigorous proceed-

ings, he endeavoured to make instant reparation for his involuntary offence by citing a pertinent passage from the law, answering with all meekness; *I wist not, brethren, that he was the high Priest; for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.*

There is another instance of the indiscretion and candor of this Apostle. Paul and Barnabas going forth to publish the Gospel, took for their companion John Mark, the nephew of Barnabas. That young evangelist, however, staggered by the dangers, which those apostles were constantly obliged to encounter, forsook them in Pamphilia in the midst of their painful labours. But afterwards, repenting of his former irresolution, he offered to accompany them in another journey. Barnabas, who had charity enough to hope all things of his nephew, wished to afford him a second trial: while Paul, whose prudence taught him to fear every thing from a young man, who had already given an indisputable proof of his inconstancy, refused his consent. At length the two Apostles, unable to decide the matter to their mutual satisfaction, took the resolution of separating one from another. Paul went to preach the Gospel in Syria with Silas; while Barnabas, accompanied by his nephew, proceeded to proclaim Christ in the isle of Cyprus. Thus the separations of true christians, without producing any schism in the church, frequently tend to the propagation of the Gospel.

Time alone could determine, whether Barnabas was deceived by an abundance of *charity*, or St. Paul through an excess of *prudence*. The event turned the balance in favour of the judgment of Barnabas: the conduct of John Mark on this second mission was irreproachable. From that time St. Paul with his usual candor, forgetting the former instability of Mark, placed the utmost confidence in him, received him with joy as the companion of his labours, revoked the order he had formerly given respecting him, and recommended him to the churches as a faithful minister. Thus much may be inferred from the following passage in his epistle to the Colossians: *Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, touching whom ye received commandments; if he come unto you, receive him.*

Thus the sincere followers of Christ are ever anxious to repair their involuntary faults: faults which *we*, as well as the apostles, are always exposed to the commission of, and

which should constrain us to say, with St. Paul ; *Now we know things and persons in part*. This imperfection in our knowledge will sometimes produce errors in our judgment, and those errors may probably influence our conduct. But, if in these failings there is no mixture of malice ; if we sin through ignorance, and in the integrity of our hearts ; God imputes not to us those errors ; provided that we are always prepared, like St. Paul, to confess and repair them. To err is the lot of humanity : obstinacy in error is the character of a Demon : but humbly to acknowledge, and anxiously to repair an error, is to exhibit a virtue more rare and valuable than innocence itself, when accompanied with any degree of conceit and pride.

They, who give the portraits of legendary saints, generally paint them without a single failing. But they, who wish faithfully to imitate the sacred authors, are obliged to employ shades as well as lights, even in their most celebrated pieces. If this part of the portrait of St. Paul should not appear brilliant, it will serve, at least, to manifest the reality of the original, the liberality of the Apostle, and the fidelity of the painter.



TRAIT XIII.

HIS DETESTATION OF PARTY-SPIRIT AND DIVISIONS.

WHILE the spirit of the world is confessedly a spirit of particular interest, pride, and division, the spirit of true religion is manifested, among its sincere professors, as a spirit of concord, humility, and brotherly love. The true minister, animated in an especial manner by this divine spirit, losing sight of his own reputation and honour, is unweariedly engaged in seeking the glory of God, and the edification of his neighbour. Perfectly satisfied with the lowest place, and distinguished as much by condescension to his brethren as by respect to his superiors, he is ever on his guard against that spirit of party, which is continually seeking to disturb the union of the church, whether it be by too great a fondness for particular customs, by an obstinate zeal for any

system of doctrines, or by too passionate an attachment to some eminent teacher.

Without persecuting those, who are led by so dangerous a spirit, the good pastor employs every effort to reunite them under the great Head of the church. Arguing against the folly of those who are ready to separate themselves from the company of their brethren, he takes up the language of St. Paul, and says: ‘O foolish christians, who hath bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Ye have indeed, been called unto liberty: only use not liberty as an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, among which are these, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions and heresies: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they, which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, faith, meekness, temperance. If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. Endeavour, therefore, to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.’

When the people seek to honour a true minister by placing him at the head of any party in the church, he refuses the proffered dignity with a humble and holy indignation. His soul is constantly penetrated with those sentiments, under the influence of which the apostle Paul thus nobly expressed himself: ‘I seek not my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind. For it hath been declared unto me, that there are contentions among you; and that every one of you saith, I am of Paul,

and, I of Apollos, and, I of Cephas, and, I of Christ. But, Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? Who is Paul, but a minister by whom ye believed? Therefore let no man glory in men, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas; but rather in our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named.'

By such exhortations, it is, and by maintaining, at the same time, a conduct conformable to the nature of such exhortations, that every faithful minister endeavours to engage christians of all denominations, to walk together *in love, as Christ also walked, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord, and submitting one to another in the fear of God*, till the arrival of that promised period, when the whole company of the faithful shall be of one heart and one mind.

But after all these exertions, for the extirpation of a sectarian spirit from the church, they, who content themselves with the exterior of christianity, as the pharisees were contented with the ceremonies of the mosaic worship, will, sooner or later, accuse every evangelical pastor of attempting to form a particular sect. When modern pharisees observe the strict union, which reigns among true believers, a union, which every faithful minister labours to establish among his people, as well by example as by precept; when they behold penitent sinners deeply sensible of their guilt, and frequently assembling together for the purpose of imploring the blessings of *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*; they immediately take the alarm, and cry out—*These men does exceedingly trouble our city, teaching customs, which are not lawful for us to receive*, and maintaining such a conduct as is most inconvenient for us to follow.

Happy are those cities, in which the minister of Christ is able to discover a Nicodemus, a Gamaliel, or some worshippers possessed of as much candour as the Jews of Rome, who desired to hear what the persecuted Paul had to offer, in behalf of that newly-risen sect, which was every where *spoken against*. Till this amiable candour shall universally prevail among the nominal members of the church, true christianity, even in the centre of Christendom, will always find perverse contradiction, and sometimes cruel persecution.

TRAIT XIV.

HIS REJECTION OF PRAISE.

THE minister of the present day labours chiefly with a view to his own advantage and honour. He endeavours to please, that he may be admired of men. *He loves the chief seats in synagogues*, public greetings, and honourable titles: thus tacitly challenging, by his unreasonable pretensions to the respect and homage of men, a part of that glory, which is due to God alone.

A totally different character is maintained by the true minister. His discourses, his actions, his look, his deportment, all agree to say, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.* If the arm of the Omnipotent enables him to perform any extraordinary work, which the multitude do not immediately refer to the *Author of every good and perfect gift*, he cries out with St. Peter, *Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had performed what appears to excite your astonishment? The God of our fathers hath upon this occasion, glorified his Son Jesus: and the faith, which is by him, hath effected this extraordinary work in the presence of you all.* On all occasions he can say with the great Apostle: ‘Do I seek to please men? if I yet pleased men, unless for their edification, I should not be the servant of Christ. With me it is a very small thing, that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment. But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, who trieth our hearts. Neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know: nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others.’ By such a conduct he distinguishes himself, as a faithful ambassador of the blessed Jesus, who expressed himself in the following lowly terms, to those, who had reproached him with a spirit of self-exaltation: ‘I do nothing of myself, but as my father hath taught me, I speak these things. I seek not mine own glory: there is one, that seeketh and judgeth. If I honour myself, my honour is nothing. It is my Father, that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that He is your God.’

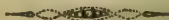
There may be peculiar cases, in which a ministring servant of God may be allowed to call upon christians, for a public testimony of their approbation; and when this is refused, he is justified in modestly calling their attention to every past proof of his integrity and zeal. Thus St. Paul, as a proper means of maintaining his authority among the Corinthians, who had manifested an unjust partiality toward teachers of a very inferior order, entered into a long detail of those revelations and labours, which gave him a more than ordinary claim to the respect of every church. But whenever he commended himself, he did it with the utmost reluctance, as one constrained by the peculiarity of his circumstances to act in immediate contrariety to his real disposition. Hence, whenever he recounts the particular favours, with which God had honoured him, he speaks in the third person, as of another man: *Of such a one will I glory; yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. For we dare not make ourselves of the number of those, who commend themselves, measuring themselves by themselves, without any reference to the excellent graces and endowments of others. But he, that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he, that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.*

Nothing affords greater satisfaction to false apostles than commendation and praise; while the true minister shrinks with horror from those very honours, which they assume all the forms of Proteus to obtain. When the multitude, led by their admiration of a faithful preacher, follow him with unsuitable expressions of applause, he meets them with unfeigned indignation, arrests their impious plaudits, and rejects their idolatrous adulations, crying out with St. Paul—*Sirs! why do ye these things? we also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you, that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God. We are neither the way, the truth, nor the life; but we point you to that way, which the truth has discovered, and through which eternal life may be obtained, entreating you to walk therein with all simplicity and meekness. And remember, that instead of affecting in our discourses that vain wisdom, which the world so passionately admires, we faithfully proclaim Christ: and, to humble us the more before God and man we preach Christ crucified.*

By this humble carriage the ministring disciples of Christ are principally known. By this they copy the amiable ex-

ample of John the baptist, who cheerfully humbled himself, that Christ might be exalted, crying out in the language of that self-renouncing teacher—‘Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world! There standeth one among you, whom ye know not, whose shoes latchet we are not worthy to unloose. We baptize with water: but he baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.’ Beware then of entertaining too high an idea of our ministry; and remember, that *He must increase in your estimation, but we must decrease.*

After beholding John the baptist, who was accounted greater than any of the prophets, abasing himself in the presence of Christ; and after hearing St. Paul, who was far superior to the Baptist, exclaiming in the humility of his soul—*I live not; but Christ liveth in me*—how can we sufficiently express our astonishment at the conduct of those titular apostles, who either set up a vain philosophy in the place of Christ, or employ the cross of their Lord, as a kind of pedestal, for the support of those splendid monuments, by which their pride is endeavouring to perpetuate the memory of their eloquence. Self-conceited orators! When shall we rank you with the faithful ministers of the humble Jesus? When shall we behold the character you have assumed, and the conduct you maintain sweetly harmonizing with each other? When shall we hear you addressing your flocks, with the unaffected simplicity and condescension of the great apostle; *We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and, far from elevating ourselves above you, on account of the commission we have received, ourselves your servants for Jesus sake.* Then we might with propriety salute you, as humble imitators of St. Paul, as zealous ministers of the Gospel, and as faithful servants of that condescending Saviour, who *came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.*



TRAIT XV.

HIS UNIVERSAL LOVE.

TRUE christians are distinguished from Jews, Mahometans, and all other worshippers, by that spirit of universal love, which is the chief ornament and glory of their

profession. But among evangelical pastors this holy disposition appears in a more eminent degree. They feel for the inconsiderate, and the sinful, that tender compassion, of which Christ has left us an example. Their conduct answers to that beautiful description of charity, with which St. Paul presented the Corinthian church, and which may be considered, as an emblematical representation of his own character, from the time of his conversion to the christian faith. Universal love is that invigorating sap, which, passing from the *true vine* into its several branches, renders them fruitful in every good work. But this divine principle circulates through chosen ministers, with peculiar force, and in more than ordinary abundance, as so many principal boughs, by which a communication is opened between the root and the lesser branches.

The faithful pastor entertains an affecting remembrance of those benevolent expressions, which the good Shepherd addressed to the apostle Peter, and in the person of that apostle to all his successors in the ministry, repeating them even to the third time : *Lovest thou me ? Feed my Sheep.* As though he had said, the greatest proof you can possibly give of your unfeigned attachment to me, is, to cherish the souls, which I have redeemed, and to make them the objects of your tenderest regard. Such is the affectionate precept, which every faithful minister has received together with his sacred commission, and to which he yields a more ready and cheerful obedience, from a firm dependence upon the following solemn declaration of his gracious Master—*When the Son of man shall come in his glory, he shall say to all the children of love, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done good unto one of the least of these my brethren, whether their wants were corporeal or spiritual, ye have done it unto me.*

The love of the evangelical pastor, like that of St. Paul, is unbounded. God, faith that charitable apostle, ‘will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth : I exhort, therefore, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men : for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.’ But not content with submitting to the exhortation of St. Paul, with respect to the duty of universal prayer, he endeavours to copy the example of that apostle, in labouring for the salvation of all men : *I am made all things to all men, that I might*

by all means save some. Being by regeneration a *partaker of the divine nature*, he bears a lovely, though imperfect resemblance to his Heavenly Parent, whose chief perfection is *Love*. Like the High Priest of his profession, he breathes nothing but charity; and like the Father of lights, he makes the sun of beneficence to rise upon all men. To describe this lesser sun in its unlimited course, and to point out the admirable variety, with which it distributes its light and its heat, is to delineate with precision the character of a faithful pastor.



TRAIT XVI.

HIS PARTICULAR LOVE TO THE FAITHFUL.

THE universal love of the true minister manifests itself in a particular manner, according to the different situations of those, who are the objects of it. When he finds the whole conduct of professing christians conformable to the nature of their sacred profession, *he loves them with a pure heart fervently*; and giving way to the effusions of a holy joy, he expresses his affection in words like these: ‘Brethren, we are comforted over you, in all our affliction and distress, by your faith: for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. And what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy, wherewith we joy for your sakes before God?’ In these expressions of St. Paul an astonishing degree of affection is discovered. *Now we live*—as though he had said, We have a two-fold life, the *principal life* which we receive immediately from Christ, and an *accessory life*, which we derive from his members, through the medium of brotherly love. And so deeply are we interested in the concerns of our brethren, that we are sensibly affected by the variations they experience in their spiritual state, through the power of that christian sympathy, which we are unable to describe. Thus when sin has detached any of our brethren from Christ, and separated them from the body of the faithful, we are penetrated with the most sincere distress: and, on the contrary, whenever they become more affectionately connected with us, and more intimately united to Christ, our common Head, our

spirits are then sensibly refreshed, and invigorated with new degrees of life and joy.

Reader, dost thou understand this language? Hast thou felt the power of this christian sympathy? Or has thy faith never yet produced these genuine sentiments of brotherly love? Then thou hast spoken as a person equally destitute of sensibility and truth, whenever thou hast dared to say—I *believe in the communion of saints.*

TRAIT XVII.

HIS LOVE TO THOSE WHOSE FAITH WAS WAVERING.

WHEN a minister, after having been made instrumental in the conversion of sinners, perceives their faith decreasing, and their love growing cold, he feels for them, what the Redeemer felt, when he wept over Jerusalem. Not less concerned for the remissness of his believing hearers, than St. Paul was distressed by the instability of his Galatian and Corinthian converts, he pleads with them in the same affectionate terms: ‘Ye know, ye who are the seals of my ministry, how I preached the Gospel unto you at the first. And ye despised me not, but received me as an Angel of God. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you,’ I tell you with sorrow, that after all my confidence in you, ‘I stand in doubt of you. Our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. We are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto my children) be ye also enlarged. Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? or what part hath he, that believeth, with an infidel? Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye

shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. We beseech you, therefore brethren, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.'

This language of the christian pastor is almost unintelligible to the minister, who is merely of man's appointing. Having never converted a single soul to Christ, he has neither spiritual son nor daughter, and is entirely unacquainted with that painful *travail*, which is mentioned by St. Paul. His bowels are straitened towards Christ and his members, and having closely united himself to the men of the world, he considers the assembly of the faithful as a company of ignorant enthusiasts. But, notwithstanding the spiritual insensibility of these ill-instructed teachers, who never studied in the school of Christ, there is no other token, by which either sincere christians, or true ministers can be discerned, except that fervent love, which the Galatians entertained for St. Paul, before their falling away, and which that Apostle ever continued to entertain for them. *By this, saith our LORD, shall all men know, that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

TRAIT XVIII.

HIS LOVE TO HIS COUNTRYMEN AND HIS ENEMIES.

ST. Paul, like his rejected master, was persecuted even to death by the Jews, his countrymen, while he generously exposed himself to innumerable hardships, in labouring for their good. These furious devotees, inspired with envy, revenge, and a persecuting zeal, hunted this Apostle from place to place, as a public pest. And when the Gentiles, on a certain occasion, had rescued him out of their hands, forty of the most hardened among them engaged themselves, by an oath, neither to eat nor drink, till they had assassinated him. But notwithstanding the most indubitable proofs of their bloody disposition towards him, his fervent charity threw a vail over their cruelty, and made him wish to die for his persecutors. 'I declare, saith he, the truth in Christ, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great

heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart : for I could wish, that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.' As though he should say : *It is written, cursed is every one, that hangeth on a tree :* Thus Christ himself became *accursed* for us, and I also would lay down my life for my brethren, ' that I may have fellowship with him in his sufferings being made conformable unto his death, and filling up that, which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake, which is the church.' It is by expressions so charitable, and by actions, which demonstrate the sincerity of those expressions, that christians avenge themselves of their enemies, and work upon the hearts of their countrymen.

If the sentiments of every sincere disciple of Christ are expressed in the preceding language of St. Paul, how deplorable then must be the state of those christians, whose anxiety, either for their own salvation, or for that of their nearest relations, bears no proportion to that eager concern, which this Apostle manifested for the salvation of his bitterest persecutors ! And if good pastors feel so ardent a desire to behold all men actuated by the spirit of Christ, without excepting even their most malicious enemies, what shall we say to those ministers, who never shed a single tear, nor ever breathed one ardent prayer, for the conversion of their parishioners, their friends, or their families ?

TRAIT XIX.

HIS LOVE TO THOSE WHOM HE KNEW ONLY BY REPORT.

THOUGH the true minister takes a peculiar interest in every thing, that concerns the salvation of his countrymen, yet his christian benovolence is far from being confined within the narrow limits of a particular country. He desires to bear the name of his Saviour to the ends of the earth ; and if he is not able to do this by his personal addresses, he will do it, at least, by his earnest wishes and his constant prayers. If providence has not yet fixed him in a particular church, he writes, in the manner of St. Paul, to the inhabi-

tants of the most distant countries—‘ I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that I consider myself as a debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians; both to the wise and the unwise. And, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you, that are at Rome, where error and impiety have fixed their throne. For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one, that believeth.’ If he writes to stranger-converts, whose faith is publicly spoken of in the world, he declares his sincere attachment to them, and his longing desire to afford them every spiritual assistance in terms like these—‘ God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers. Making request, if by any means, I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God, to come unto you. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you, some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established: that is, that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me.’

If the Apostle Paul, when he knew the Romans no otherwise than by report, expressed so ardent a desire to see them, for the sole purpose of inciting them to seek after higher degrees of faith and piety; what must be the disposition of those ministers, who feel no desires of this nature even for the members of their own flock? And in how great an error are those christians, who frequently assemble together, either in their own houses, or in more public places, for the very purpose of mutually forgetting the restraints of piety, losing their time in frivolous conversation, and debasing their minds by puerile amusements! Further: If the new nature of the regenerate excites in them that lively concern for the salvation of their neighbours, which St. Paul expressed for the salvation of those, who inhabited the remotest parts of the earth, is it becoming in the faithful to stifle the motions of that commendable zeal, which christian charity alone can inspire? And if there are to be found among us dignified teachers, who, far from seconding a zeal so necessary in our day, are rather disposed to extinguish the first sparks of it, wherever they are discernable; whom may they be said to take for their model, Paul the Apostle, or Saul the Pharisee; doubtless Saul, the agent of a bigoted sect, and the open persecutor of the faithful.

TRAIT XX.

HIS CHARITY TOWARDS THE POOR IN GIVING OR PROCURING FOR THEM TEMPORAL RELIEF.

THOUGH our Lord came principally to save the souls of sinners, yet he was by no means unmindful of their bodies. *He went about doing good*, in the most unlimited sense, daily relieving, with equal care, the corporeal and spiritual maladies of the people. Thus when he had distributed the word of God to those, who were hungering and thirsting after righteousness, he expressed an anxious concern for the support of those among his followers, who were sensible of no other wants, except such as were of a temporal nature: *I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat*—and not content with barely expressing his concern for their corporeal necessities, he wrought an astonishing miracle for their immediate relief. The true minister cheerfully imitates the conduct of his gracious Master, by a strict and affectionate attention to the spiritual, and temporal wants of his people. ‘James, Cephas, and John, saith St. Paul, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go unto the heathen: only they would, that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.’

When the liberality of St. Paul toward his necessitous brethren was restrained by his own excessive indigence, he employed the most effectual means to procure for them the generous benefactions of their wealthier companions in the faith of the Gospel. The following passages extracted from his epistles may serve as sufficient proofs of this, ‘Brethren, I cannot but inform you of the grace of God, bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; how that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves; praying us with much entreaty, that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints—Therefore as ye abound

in faith, in utterance, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also. I speak by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. Wherefore shew ye, before the churches, the proof of our love, and of our boasting on your behalf.'

Not yet content with these earnest solicitations in behalf of the poor, the Apostle thus proceeds to enforce his importunities. 'I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they should go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness. But this I say, he, that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he, that soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully. God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: as it is written, he hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor; his righteousness remaineth for ever. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower, both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness: that ye may be enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causes through us thanksgiving to God. For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God: while by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the Gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men.' Who could possibly refuse any thing to a godly minister pleading the cause of the poor, with all this apostolic dignity, simplicity, and zeal?

After having obtained alms for the poor, the Apostle Paul cautiously avoided all suspicion of appropriating any part of them to the relief of his own necessities; and was equally careful, that they were never misemployed through the unfaithfulness of those, who were appointed to distribute them. One of our brethren, adds the Apostle, *chosen of the churches* accompanies us in our journey 'with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind: avoiding this, that no man should

blame us in this abundance, which is administered by us : providing for honest things not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.' Mentioning again his favourite employment, he writes to a distant church—' Now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints, which are at Jerusalem. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them, this fruit, I will come by you into Spain. Now I beseech you brethren, that ye strive together in your prayers for me, that I may be delivered from them, that do not believe in Judea ; and that the service, which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints.'

Thus to wait upon the churches, and particularly thus to attend upon the poor, is to merit the name of a faithful minister.



TRAIT XXI.

HIS CHARITY TOWARD SINNERS IN OFFERING THEM EVERY SPIRITUAL ASSISTANCE.

TO solicit alms for those, who are destitute of food and raiment, and at the same time to withhold the word of God from those, *who hunger and thirst after righteousness*, is to manifest an unhappy inconsistency of character. Such inconsistencies, however, are frequently discoverable, even among pastors, who pique themselves upon their disposition to works of benevolence and charity.

Man has an immortal soul. This soul, which is properly himself, is rendered, by sin so totally ignorant and so completely miserable, that she seeks to enrich herself with the vanities of the world, and to gratify her inclinations with the pollutions of sin. In pity to the soul in this state of wretchedness, the truths of the Gospel are proposed by a compassionate God, as a sacred remedy adapted to the nature of her innumerable wants : they illumine the blind with spiritual light and knowledge ; they clothe the naked with the robe of righteousness ; they feed the hungry ; they heal the sick ; they burst the captive's bands ; they give eternal life to those,

who are dead in trespasses and sin : in a word, they make us partakers of the great salvation of God. To publish this Gospel then, or to procure the preaching of it to sinners, is undoubtedly to give them an important proof of the most excellent charity : while, on the other hand, to refuse them the word of God, or to avoid any occasion of administering it, is absolutely or occasionally to deny them those spiritual alms and assistances, which the Saviour of the world has appointed for their daily relief. The pastor, who acts in this unbecoming manner, resembles a physician, or an almoner, who, having received a charge from his prince to supply the poor with food, or the sick with medicine, not only refuses to acquit himself of his acknowledged duty with diligence and impartiality, but strenuously opposes those, who endeavour to supply his lack of service. Such a minister seems to maintain a system as absurd and cruel, as would be that of either of those characters just alluded to, who should pretend, that no one had authority to administer alms to the poor, or medicine to the sick, except such as received pensions from the prince for that purpose ; and that even these would act in a disorderly manner, if they should dare to distribute alms or remedies except on the sabbath day, and then only during particular hours.

So long as any pastor seeks his own glory, so long he will be subject to some degree of that contemptible jealousy, which will not suffer him to behold with pleasure, the more abundant and successful labours of his brethren. But, the faithful minister of Christ, whose chief desire is the prosperity of the church, is actuated by a totally different spirit. Though he has a peculiar satisfaction in beholding the success of his own spiritual labours ; yet, when he hears the Gospel published by others, and even by such as are apparently influenced by unworthy motives, he greatly rejoices in their success. His charity, which neither envies another's prosperity, nor seeks his own particular advantage expresses itself, upon so delicate a subject, in the language of St. Paul—' Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife, supposing to add affliction to my bonds. What then ? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached ; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and I will rejoice.'

Influenced by envy, or rendered insensible by their lukewarmness, worldly ministers are absolute strangers to the ge-

nerous pleasure here mentioned by the Apostle; nor have they the least idea of acting in a criminal manner, when they will not permit the truths of the Gospel to be freely declared by all, who are disposed to announce them.

The good pastor, by whatever name he may be distinguished, lives only to publish the Gospel, and to convert the souls committed to his charge: to restrain him then from attending to these important labours, is to force him aside from the true end of his calling, and must appear to every enlightened mind a greater act of cruelty, than to withhold the rich from giving alms, or to detain an expert swimmer from saving his drowning brethren. If such a pastor, in any period of his life, has acted like a monopolist of the Gospel, and, by denying to the poor in spirit, what was freely given for their support, has caused in any place a *famine of the word*; he believes himself abundantly more culpable than those avaricious merchants, who, by forming a monopoly of grain in the East Indies, caused a grievous famine in that country, by which an innumerable multitude of its inhabitants perished. Those covetous men denied to the bodies of their neighbours a perishable nourishment; but he has withheld from the souls of his brethren that precious manna, which might have preserved them to everlasting life. Such was the crime of those whom our Lord addressed in the following words—‘Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of Heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them, that are entering to go in.’ Observe, St. Paul’s sentiments of such characters. With respect to those Jews, ‘who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own Prophets, and have persecuted us; they please not God, and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved,’ filling up by this means the measure of their sin: *for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.*

If the character, which the Apostle here describes was odious in a Jew, without doubt it is more so in a christian, and still doubly detestable in a minister of the Gospel, whose heart should continually be animated with a fervent desire for the conversion of sinners, and the salvation of all mankind. Was it possible for those who are distinguished by this trait of the character of Antichrist to discover the tur-

pititude of their own conduct, they would acknowledge themselves abundantly more guilty than the robber, who should force away from a famished pauper the morsel of bread he had begged in his distress. They would pronounce, without any hesitation, that the foster-mother, who neglects the infant she has undertaken to cherish, and prevents her charitable neighbours from affording it any nourishment, is still more excusable than the pastor, who, not content with refusing to feed the flock of Christ, endeavours to scatter his sheep wherever they are found feeding, seeking out accusations against those who have led them to a refreshing pasture, and studying by every means to withdraw the Gospel from those penitent sinners, who, *as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby.*

Happy will be the age, in which christian pastors shall no longer be found, like the Scribes in the days of St. Paul, labouring to fill up the measure of their iniquities! Then truth and piety shall no longer be restrained by the fetters of prejudice and bigotry! Then the faithful shall worship God, and publish the Gospel, with as much freedom, as the dissipated indulge themselves in the sports of the age, or the malevolent in slandering their neighbours!



TRAIT XXII.

THE ENGAGING CONDESCENSION OF HIS HUMBLE CHARITY.

CHARITY avoids all appearance of haughtiness, and is never seen to act in an unbecoming manner. On the contrary, full of courtesy, she fears lest she should give offence to any: and, full of benevolence, she labours for the edification of all. Hence the charitable pastor cannot act otherwise than with a holy condescension towards all men, and especially toward the ignorant and poor, with whom the ministers of the present age will scarcely deign to converse: and, without ever slipping his foot into the pit of error, he sometimes approaches it, with a happy mixture of compassion and prudence, for the relief of those, who are unable to extricate themselves from it. ‘Though I am free

from all men, writes St. Paul, yet I have made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them, that are without law, as without law, that I might gain them, that are without a written law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the Gospel's sake. All things are lawful for me, continues he, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. When ye sin against the brethren by wounding their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh, while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend. Whether therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.'

Behold that sweet prudence of charity, which our Lord recommended to his disciples, he when pointed out the folly of putting *new wine* into such bottles, as were unable to resist the force of the fermenting liquor. And of this affectionate discretion he himself gave them a striking example, when he said; *I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.* If this condescending carriage was lovely in the blessed Jesus, it will ever appear amiable in his humble imitators, who can say with the Apostle Paul, to the weaker members of the church: *We have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it.*

Special care is, however, to be taken, that this charitable condescension may never betray the interests of truth and virtue. *Abstain*, saith St. Paul, *from all appearance of evil.* *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.* 'For herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men. And our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward,' among whom we have laboured in the Gospel.

If there exist pastors, who lack this condescension towards the poor, or who are destitute of that humble charity, which can familiarize itself with the most ignorant, for their edifica-

tion and comfort : if there are ministers to be found, who are ever meanly complaisant to the rich, and who are void of holy resolution in the presence of the great, instead of conducting themselves with that mingled humility and dignity, which are suitable to the character they sustain—may the one and the other be convinced of the grievous error, into which they are fallen, while they contemplate this opposite trait in the character of St. Paul.

Upon what consideration is founded the humiliating distinction, which is generally made between the rich and the poor? Was Christ manifested in a state of earthly grandeur? Did he not chiefly associate with the poor? Far from flattering the rich, did he not insinuate, that they would, with the utmost difficulty, enter into the kingdom of God? Did he not affirm, it were better for a man to be cast into the sea with a mill-stone about his neck, than to offend the poorest believer? Did he not declare, that he would consider the regard shewn to the meanest of his followers, as though he himself had been the immediate object of it? When St. James assures us, that *he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way* performs the best of all possible good works, because, by preventing a multitude of sins, he places the soul in the road to every virtue—can this declaration be supposed to lose any of its force, when applied to the soul of a poor man? Are not the lowest of men immortal as the most elevated? Did not Christ humble himself to the death of the cross for the poor, as well as the rich? *Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom?* And, finally, were the angels less ready to convey the soul of perishing Lazarus to Paradise, than that of wealthy Abraham? Perish then forever that unchristian prejudice, which dishonours the poor, nourishes the pride of the rich, and leads us to the violation of that great command, by which we become as guilty, as though we had transgressed the whole Law, the spirit of which is love. And let us remember, it is only out of the ruins of so despicable a partiality, that the *engaging condescension*, of which St. Paul has left us so lovely an example, can possibly be produced.

TRAIT XXIII.

HIS COURAGE IN DEFENCE OF OPPRESSED TRUTH.

CHARITY *rejoiceth in the Truth.* These two amiable companions are closely united together, and mutually sustain each other. It is possible, however, when an error has the suffrages of many persons respectable on account of their wisdom, their age, their rank, their labours, or their piety, that a sincere christian may be tempted to sacrifice truth to authority, or rather to a mistaken charity. But the enlightened pastor, putting on the resolution of St. Paul, will never suffer himself to be imposed upon by the appearance either of persons, or things: and though he should see himself standing alone on the side of evangelical truths, he will not fear, even singly, to act as their modest and zealous defender.

In these circumstances a luke-warm minister loses all his courage. Behold his general plea for the pusillanimity of his conduct—‘I am alone, and what success can I expect in so difficult an undertaking? The partisans of this error are persons, whom I both love and honour. Some of them have shewn me great kindness, and others have sufficient credit to prejudice the world against me. Moreover, it would be looked upon as presumption in me, who am weaker than a reed, to oppose myself to a torrent, which bears down the strongest pillars of the church.’ Such is the manner, in which he apologizes for the timidity of his conduct in those situations, where his love of truth is publicly called to the test: not considering, that to reason thus, is to forget, at once, the omnipotence of God, the force of truth, and the unspeakable worth of those souls, which error may poison and destroy.

On the contrary, the faithful minister, who, on all occasions, rejoices in the truth, *conferring not with flesh and blood*, courageously refuses to bear the yoke of any error, that must evidently be accompanied with evil consequences. In the most trying situations of this nature he imitates the conduct of the great apostle, who, when he saw a shameful error making its way into the church, placed himself in the gap, and gave way

to the emotions of his honest zeal, as related in the following passage:—‘ False brethren came in privily to spy out our liberty, which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage. To whom we gave place by subjection, no not for an hour; that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you. And when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them, which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him, insomuch that Barnabas also, under the specious pretence of not offending his neighbour, was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw, that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, if thou being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?’

This reasonable reprimand is, perhaps, one of the greatest proofs, which St. Paul ever gave of the uprightness of his intention, and the steadiness of his resolution.

Ye men of integrity! ye, who have proved how much it costs to defend the rights of truth, when it stands opposed to that deference, which condescending love obliges us to shew, in a thousand instances, to respectable authority; you alone are able to make a proper judgment of the holy violence, which was exercised by St. Paul upon this occasion. But whatever they may be called to endure, in so honourable a cause, happy are those christians, and doubly happy those pastors, who have so great a love for truth, and so true a love for their brethren, that they are ready at all times, with this faithful apostle, to sacrifice to the interests of the Gospel, every inferior consideration, every servile fear, and every worldly hope.

TRAIT XXIV.

HIS PRUDENCE IN FRUSTRATING THE DESIGNS OF HIS ENEMIES.

THERE is no kind of calumny which the incredulous have not advanced, in order to render christianity either odious, or contemptible. According to the notions of these men, to adopt the maxims of evangelical patience, argues a want of sensibility; and to regulate our conduct, according to the dictates of christian prudence, is to act the hypocrite. What we have to say, in this place, will chiefly respect the latter charge.

It has been asserted by modern infidels, that the gentleness and forbearance, which the Gospel requires of its professors, must necessarily make them the dupes of designing men, and lead them unreluctantly into the snares of their persecutors. But to draw this inference from some few passages of scripture, understood in too literal a sense, is to set truth at variance with itself, merely for the purpose of charging christians with all the evil, which, it is presumed, they might have avoided by prudence, or have overcome by resolution. The example of our Lord, and that of St. Paul, might have rectified the ideas of cavillers upon this point. When Christ exhorted his disciples to be *harmless as doves*, he admonished them at the same time to be *wise as serpents*; and of this harmless wisdom he himself gave a striking example, when he was interrogated by the Jews, respecting the lawfulness of paying tribute unto Cæsar. Well acquainted with the different sentiments of that people, with regard to the Roman yoke, without directly combating the prejudices of any party, he returned a satisfactory answer to all parties, by an inference drawn from *the image and superscription bore upon their current coin*—*Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's.*

The sincere christian, and the faithful minister, have frequent occasion for this happy prudence, as well as St. Paul, who, more than once, employed it with success. The Jews, irritated against this apostle, sought occasion to destroy him, on account of the zeal, with which he published the Gospel

among the Gentiles. Hoping to soften the prejudices, they entertained against his conduct, he recounted to them, how Jesus, being raised from the dead, and appearing to him in an extraordinary manner, had expressly sent him to the Gentiles: when the Jews, more irritated than before, would have torn him in pieces, had he not been rescued out of their hands by the Roman garrison. By this means Paul was preserved for a more peaceful hearing. And on the morrow, when he stood before the Jewish council, perceiving that the assembly was composed, partly of sadducees, who say there is *no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit*; and partly of pharisees, who believe equally in the existence of spirits and the resurrection of the body; he immediately availed himself of this circumstance, and cried out—*Men and brethren, I am a pharisee, the son of a pharisee; of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.* As though he had said—The great cause of the violent persecution, that is now raised against me, is, that I preach *Jesus and the resurrection*. Our fathers, indeed, were not absolutely assured of a life to come; but the important doctrine of the resurrection, and of the judgment, that shall follow, is now demonstrated; since God has given an incontestible proof of it, in raising up his Son Jesus from the dead. And I myself have been an eye witness of his resurrection, to whom he has appeared two several times, once as I journeyed to Damascus, and afterwards as I prayed in the temple. But when I mentioned this second appearance of a risen Saviour, my incredulous accusers began vehemently to cry out, *Away with such a fellow from the earth.* By this just exposition of the fact, and by his prudent selection of *the resurrection of Christ* from among the other great doctrines of christianity, St. Paul happily caused a division to take place among his judges. And the event answered his expectation: for *the scribes, that were of the pharisees part, arose, saying; We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit, i. e. a man risen from the dead, or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.* There is still another instance of the wisdom of the serpent, reconciling itself with the innocence of the dove, in the conduct of this Apostle, when marking the disposition of his Athenian judges, he took advantage of their taste for novelty by announcing to them *The unknown God*, to whom they had already erected an altar.

This christian prudence, equally distant from the duplicity

of hypocrites and the stupidity of idiots, merits a place among the traits which characterize this great Apostle, not only because it is worthy of our imitation, but also because it has been indirectly represented, by a modern Celsus, as mere cunning and artifice. The author here alluded to, who deserves rather to be called a great poet than a faithful painter, having disfigured this trait of St. Paul's character, with a pencil dipt in the gaul of prejudice; we gladly take this occasion of setting forth the injustice of his imputations, so illiberally cast both upon christianity itself, and the most eminent of its defenders. This witty philosopher, who has said so many good things against the spirit of persecution, never perceived, that he himself was actuated by an intolerant spirit: so true it is, that the most sagacious are liable to be blinded by passion or prejudice. The same spirit of persecution, which excited the Athenians to discountenance the justice of Aristides, as a dangerous singularity, and to punish the piety of Socrates, as a species of atheism, led the author of the philosophical dictionary to represent the prudence of St. Paul, as the duplicity of an hypocrite.

Had this severe judge occupied the seat of Ananias, he might perhaps, with an affected liberality, have overlooked the peculiarities of the Apostle's creed; but, in the end, his innate detestation of piety would have assisted him, according to the general custom of persecutors, to feign some just cause for treating him with the utmost rigour. And this he has done in our day, as far as his circumstances would permit; since, not being able to disgrace him by the hand of a public executioner, he has studied to do it with his pen, by ravishing from him, not only his reputation for extraordinary piety, but even his claim to common honesty.

Persecutor! whoever thou art, be content that thy predecessors have taken away the lives of the righteous, and spare them what they prefer infinitely before life itself, *The testimony of a good conscience.*

TRAIT XXV.

HIS TENDERNESS TOWARD OTHERS, AND HIS SEVERITY TOWARD HIMSELF.

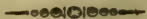
THOUGH perfectly insensible to the warm emotions of brotherly love, the worldly pastor frequently repeats, in his public discourses, those affectionate expressions, which flow so cordially from the lips of faithful ministers, *My dear brethren in Christ!* These expressions from the pulpit are almost unavoidable, upon some occasions, but, in general, they are to be regarded in no other light than the civil addresses of a haughty person, who concludes his epistles by assuring his correspondents, that he considers it an honour to subscribe himself their obedient servant. But while the worldly minister affects a degree of benevolence, which he cannot feel, the good pastor, out of the abundance of a heart overflowing with christian charity, addresses his brethren with the utmost affection and regard, not only without any danger of feigning what he has not experienced, but even without a possibility of expressing the ardour of his brotherly love. His exhortations to the faithful, like those of St. Paul, are seasoned with an unction of grace, and accompanied with a flow of tenderness, which frequently give them an astonishing affect upon his brethren, and which always evince the interest he takes in the concerns of the church. *Rebuke not an elder,* says St. Paul, *but entreat him as a father, and the younger men as brethren; the elder women as mothers, the younger as sisters, with all purity.* Such was the exhortation of this apostle to a young minister, nor was his example unsuitable to his counsel. ‘I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God. Dearly beloved, be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil, with good. I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you. I, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation, wherewith ye are called. If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, being of one accord. My beloved, work out your

own salvation with fear and trembling, We beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us, how ye ought to walk, and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. Though I might be much bold in Christ, to enjoin thee that which is convenient, yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ. I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: who in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me, whom I have sent again. Thou therefore receive him that is mine own bowels. Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord.' Such was the tenderness and affection, with which St. Paul was accustomed to address his believing brethren. But the language of this Apostle was very different when he spoke of himself, and of that body of sin, which constrained him to cry out, *O wretched man, that I am.*

It is the character of too many persons to be severe toward the failings of others, while they shew the utmost lenity toward themselves, with respect both to their infirmities and their vices. Always ready to place the faults of their neighbours in an odious light, and their own in the most favourable point of view, they seem to be made up of nothing, but partiality and self-love; while the true minister reserves his greatest indulgence for others, and exercises the greatest severity toward himself. 'All things are lawful for me, writes St. Paul, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Know ye not, that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize? And every one, that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things: now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.

One reflection naturally finishes this trait of the character of St. Paul. If this spiritual man, if this great Apostle, thought himself obliged to use such strenuous efforts, that he might not be rejected before God at the last; in how great danger are those careless pastors and christians, who, far from accustoming themselves to holy acts of self-denial, satisfy their natural desires, without any apprehension, and treat

those as enthusiasts, who begin to imitate St. Paul, by regarding their baptismal vow, and renouncing their sensual appetites.



TRAIT XXVI.

HIS LOVE NEVER DEGENERATED INTO COWARDICE, BUT REPROVED AND CONSOLED AS OCCASION REQUIRED.

THE charity of the true minister bears no resemblance to that phantom of a virtue, that mean complaisance, that unmanly pliancy, that unchristian cowardice, or that affected generosity, which the ministers of this day delight to honour with the name of charity. According to these insufficient judges, to be charitable—is only to give some trifling alms out of our abundant superfluities, to tolerate the most dangerous errors, without daring to lift up the standard of truth, and to behold the overflowings of vice, without attempting to oppose the threatening torrent. Such would be the mistaken charity of a Surgeon, who, to spare the mortifying arm of his friend, should suffer the gangrene to spread over his whole body. Such was the charity of the high-priest Eli toward Hophni and Phinehas; an impious charity, which permitted him to behold their shameful debaucheries with too favourable an eye: a fatal charity, which opened that abyss of evil, which finally swallowed them up, and into which they dragged with them their father, their children, the people of Israel, and the church, over which they had been appointed to preside.

The good pastor, conscious, that he shall save a soul from death, if he can but prevail with a sinner to forsake his evil way, uses every effort to accomplish so important a work. And among other probable means, which he employs on this occasion, he tries the force of severe reprehension, rebuking the wicked with a holy authority; and, if it be necessary, returning to the charge with a spark of that glowing zeal, with which his Master was influenced, when he forced from the temple those infamous buyers and sellers, who had profaned it with their carnal merchandize. Thus St. Paul, on

receiving information, that scandalous errors had been discovered in the conduct of a member of the Corinthian church, immediately wrote to that church, in the following severe and solemn manner—‘It is reported, that there is fornication among you, And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he, that hath done this deed, might be taken away from among you. Know ye not, that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump,’ and that the plague in any single member of a society is sufficient to infect the whole company? ‘Purge out therefore the old leaven, and put away from among yourselves that wicked person. If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, keep not company with such a one, no not to eat. Be not deceived: fornicators shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Know ye not, that your bodies are the members of Christ? Flee fornication’ therefore, and avoid the company of fornicators. ‘For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit which are God’s. Further, I verily as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already concerning’ the lascivious person, that is among you, ‘to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus.’

When the true minister has passed the severest censures upon sinners, and beholds those censures attended with the desired effect, he turns to the persons he lately rebuked with testimonies of that unbounded charity, that *beareth all things*, and *hopeth all things*. More ready, if possible, to relieve the dejected than to the humble the presumptuous, after having manifested the courage of a lion, he puts on the gentleness, of a lamb, consoling and encouraging the penitent offenders and never ceasing to intercede for him, till his pardon is obtained both from God and man. Thus St. Paul, who had so sharply rebuked the Corinthians in his first epistle, gave them abundant consolation in his second, and exhorted them to receive with kindness the person, whom he had before enjoined them to excommunicate. It is easy to recognize the tenderness of Christ in the following language of this benevolent Apostle. ‘I wrote unto you my first epistle out of much affliction and anguish of heart, with many tears, not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love, which I have more abundantly unto you. Great is my glorying of you, I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding

joyful in all our tribulation. God, that comforteth them, that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus my messenger, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, and your fervent mind toward me. For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent. Now I rejoyce, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance. For ye were made sorry after a godly manner—For behold, what carefulness it wrought in you! what clearing of yourselves! what holy indignation! what fear! what vehement desire! what zeal! what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter. Moreover, we were comforted in your comfort. Yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all. And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, and how you received him,' together with my reproof, 'with fear and trembling. I rejoyce therefore, that I have confidence in you in all things.' And with respect to the person, who has caused us so much distress, 'Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that now ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore, I beseech you, that ye would confirm your love toward him. To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also;' nay, I have already forgiven him, for your sakes, as in the presence of Christ.

Great God! appoint over thy flock vigilant, charitable, and courageous pastors, who may discern the sinner through all his deceitful appearances, and separate him from thy peaceful fold, whether he be an unclean goat, or a ravenous wolf. Permit not thy ministers to confound the just with the unjust, rendering contemptible the most sacred mysteries, by admitting to them persons, with whom virtuous heathens would blush to converse. Touch the hearts of those pastors, who harden thy rebellious people, by holding out tokens of thy favour to those, who are the objects of thy wrath: and permit no longer the bread of life, which they carelessly distribute to all, who chuse to profane it, to become in their unhallowed hands the bread of death. Discover to them the impiety of offering their holy things to the dogs: and awaken in them a holy fear of becoming ac-

complices with those hypocritical monsters, who press into thy temple to crucify thy Son afresh ; and who, by a constant profanation of the symbols of our holy faith, add to their other abominations the execrable act of eating and drinking their own damnation, and that with as much composure, as some among them swallow down the intoxicating draught, or utter the most impious blasphemies.

AN OBJECTION ANSWERED.

BEFORE we proceed to the consideration of another trait of the character of St. Paul, it will be necessary to refute an objection to which the preceeding trait may appear liable. ‘Dare you,’ it may be asked, ‘propose to us, as a model, a man, who ‘could strike Elymas with blindness, and ‘deliver up to Satan the body of a sinner?’

Answer. The excellent motive, and the happy success of the Apostle’s conduct, in both these instances, entirely justify him. He considered affliction not only as the crucible, in which God is frequently pleased to purify the just, but as the last remedy to be employed for the restoration of obstinate sinners. Behold the reason, why the charity of the primitive church demanded, in behalf of God, that the rod should not be spared, when the impiety of men was no longer able to be restrained by gentler means ; determining, that it was far better to be brought to repentance, even by the sharpest sufferings, than to live and die in a sinful state. To exercise this high degree of holy and charitable severity toward a sinner, was, in some mysterious manner, *to deliver up his body to Satan*, who was looked upon as the executioner of God’s righteous vengeance in criminal cases—Thus Satan destroyed the first born of Egypt, smote the subjects of David with the pestilence, and cut off the vast army of Sennacherib. St. John has thrown some light upon this profound mystery, by asserting, *There is a sin unto death* : and the case of Ahab is fully in point ; for when that king had committed this sin, a spirit of error received immediate orders to lead him forth to execution upon the plains of Ramoth-Gilead. This awful doctrine is further confirmed by St. Luke, when he relates, that in the same instant, when the people, in honour of Herod, gave a shout, saying, *It is in the voice of a God and not of a man ; the angel of the Lord smote*

him, because he gave not God the glory : and he was eaten up of worms, and gave up the ghost. The punishment thus inflicted, by the immediate order of God, was always proportioned to the nature of the offence. If the sin was *not unto death*, it was followed by some temporary affliction, as in the cases of Elymas and the incestuous Corinthian. If the crime committed was of such a nature that the death of the sinner became necessary, either for the salvation of his soul, for the reparation of his crime, or to alarm those, who might probably be corrupted by his pernicious example, he was then either smitten with some incurable disease, as in the case of Herod ; or struck with immediate death, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, who sought to veil their hypocrisy with appearances of piety, and their double dealing with a lie. Had M. Voltaire considered the christian church, as a well regulated species of theocracy, he would have seen the folly of his whole reasoning with respect to the authority of that church, in its primitive state. And convinced, that God has a much greater right to pronounce by his ministers a just sentence of corporeal punishment, and even death itself, than any temporal prince can claim to pronounce such sentence by his officers : that daring philosopher, instead of pointing his sarcasms against an institution so reasonable and holy, would have been constrained to tremble before the Judge of all the earth.

Finally. It is to be observed, that when this kind of jurisdiction was exercised in the church, the followers of Christ, not having any magistrates of their own religion, lived under the government of those heathenish rulers, who tolerated those very crimes, which were peculiarly offensive to the pure spirit of the Gospel. And on this account God was pleased to permit the most eminent among his people, on some extraordinary occasions, to exercise that terrible power, which humbled the offending church of Corinth, and overthrew the forcerer Elymas in his wicked career. If it be enquired—What would become of mankind, were the clergy of this day possessed of the extraordinary power of St. Paul ? We answer—The terrible manner, in which St. Paul sometimes exercised the authority he had received, with respect to impenitent sinners, is not left as an example to the ecclesiastics of the present day, unless they should come (which is almost impossible) into similar circumstances, and attain to

equal degrees of discernment, faith, and charity, with this Apostle himself.

TRAIT XXVII.

HIS PERFECT DISINTERESTEDNESS.

IF *charity seeketh not her own*; and if it is required, that the *conversation* of the faithful should be *without covetousness*; it becomes the true minister, in an especial manner to maintain an upright and disinterested conduct in the world.

Though it be true, that *they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar*; yet nothing is so detestable to the faithful pastor, as the idea of enriching himself with the sacred spoils of that altar. Observe how St. Paul expresses himself upon this subject. ‘We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. Having, therefore, food and raiment, let us be therewith content. But they, that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God,’ who art set apart as a minister of the everlasting Gospel, ‘flee these things: and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.’ With regard to myself, ‘I have learned, in whatever state I am, therewith to be content. Every where, and in all things, I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. Neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness. For ye remember our labour and travel, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you. Ye are our witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably, we behaved ourselves among you, that believe. Behold the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you; for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you.’ Behold the disinterestedness

of the faithful shepherd, who is ever less ready to receive food and clothing from the flock, than to labour for its protection and support! Behold the spirit of Christ! And let the pastor, who is influenced by a different spirit, draw that alarming inference from his state, which he is taught to do by the following expression of St. Paul: *If any man hath not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

Happy would be the christian church, were it blessed with disinterested pastors! Avaritious ministers, who are more taken up with the concerns of earth, than with the things of Heaven, who are more disposed to enrich their families, than to supply the necessities of the poor, who are more eager to multiply their benefices, or to augment their salaries, than to improve their talents, and encrease the number of the faithful—Such ministers, instead of benefiting the church, harden the impenitent, aggravate their own condemnation, and force infidels to believe, that the holy ministry is used, by the generality of its professors, as a comfortable means of securing to themselves the perishable bread, if not the fading honours, of the present life.



TRAIT XXVIII.

HIS CONDESCENSION IN LABOURING, AT TIMES, WITH HIS OWN HANDS, THAT HE MIGHT PREACH INDUSTRY BY EXAMPLE, AS WELL AS BY PRECEPT.

SUCH is the disinterestedness of the true minister, that though he might claim a subsistence from the sacred office, to which he has been solemnly consecrated, yet he generously chooses to sacrifice his rights, when he cannot enjoy them without giving some occasion for reproach. To supply his daily wants, he is not ashamed to labour with his own hands, when he is called to publish the Gospel, either among the poor, or in those countries, where the law has not appointed him a maintenance, as among heathen nations and savage tribes: nor will he refuse to do this, when his lot falls among a slothful people, animating them to diligence in their several vocations by his prudent condescension, that the Gos-

pel may not be blamed. In such circumstances, if his own patrimony is insufficient for his support, no disciple of Jesus will blush to follow the example of St. Paul, who gives the following representation of his own conduct in cases of a like nature—‘Have I committed an offence in abasing myself, that you might be exalted, because I have preached to you the Gospel of God freely? When I was present with you and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself. As the truth of Christ is in me; no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia. Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth. But that I may cut off occasion from them, that desire occasion,’ and who would not fail to represent me as a self-interested person, were they able to charge me with the enjoyment of my just right among you. ‘I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel: ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak; and to remember the words of our Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. Ye know, how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you, neither did we eat any man’s bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travel night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you. For even, when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any man would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear, that there are some, which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies.’ Happy were those times of christian simplicity, when the Apostles of Christ thought it no disgrace to follow some useful occupation, for the relief of their temporal necessities—when, instead of eating the bread of idleness, they cast their nets alternately for fishes and for men—when they quitted the tabernacles, in which they were wont to labour, for the sacred recreation of setting before sinners *a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens*. Of how much greater value were the nets of St. Peter, than dogs of the chase; and the working implements of St. Paul, than those tables of play,

at which many of his unworthy successors are now seeking amusement!

But notwithstanding all the circumspection and prudence of the faithful pastor, even though he should think it necessary to preach industry by example, as well as by precept; yet if his exhortations are more frequent than those of his lukewarm brethren, he will be reproached, by the irreligious part of the world, as an indirect advocate for indolence. The enemies of piety and truth are still ready to renew the old objection of Pharaoh against the service of God: 'Wherefore do ye let the people from their works? The people of the land are many, and you make them rest from their burdens. They be idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God. Let there more work be laid upon the men, and let them not regard vain words.' Such is the erroneous judgment, which is generally formed respecting the most zealous servants of God: but while they feel the bitterness of these unmerited reproaches, they draw more abundant consolation from the encouraging language of their gracious Master—'Blessed are ye, when men shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets, which were before you.'

The declared adversaries of religion are not, however, the only persons, who accuse a laborious minister of diverting the people from their business, by the too frequent returns of public exhortation and prayer: there are others, not wholly destitute of piety, who frequently add weight to these unjust accusations. Such are the half-converted, who not yet understanding the inestimable worth of that bread, which nourisheth the soul to everlasting life, are chiefly engaged in labouring for the bread which perisheth. Men of this character, engaging themselves in a vast variety of earthly concerns, incessantly *disquiet themselves in vain*, and consider those hours as running to waste, in which a zealous pastor detains them from worldly cares and frivolous enjoyments. While he is engaged in teaching, that *one thing only is absolutely needful*, they are grasping at every apparent good, that solicits their affections: and while he is insisting upon the necessity of choosing *that good part, which shall not be taken away*, these formal professors are ready to reason with

him, as Martha with Jesus—Dost thou not know, how greatly we are cumbered with a multiplicity of vexatious concerns, and *carest thou not* that our assistants and dependants are detained from their necessary avocations by an indolent attendance upon thy ministry?

These false sentiments, with respect both to the ministers and the word of GOD, which too generally prevail among nominal christians, have their source in that direct opposition, which must always subsist between the grand maxim of the children of GOD, and the distinguishing principle of worldly men—*Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness*, saith the blessed Jesus, *and all these things*, which are further necessary to your welfare, *shall be added unto you*: No, replies the prince of this world; seek ye first the enjoyments of time and sense, and all other things, that are needful to your well-being shall be added over and above. From these two opposite principles results that entire contrariety, which has been observed in all ages between those, who are laying up treasures upon earth, and those, who have set their affections upon things, that are above. Happy are the faithful, and doubly happy the pastors, who, constantly imitating the great Apostle, according to their several vocations, pray and labour at the same time, both for their daily bread, and the bread of eternal life; In thus observing the twofold command of Moses and of Christ, some reasonable hope may be entertained, that their good works will at length overcome the aversion of their enemies, as those of the first christians overcame the deep-rooted prejudices of the heathen world.



TRAIT XXIX.

THE RESPECT HE MANIFESTED FOR THE HOLY ESTATE OF MATRIMONY, WHILE CHRISTIAN PRUDENCE ENGAGED HIM TO LIVE IN A STATE OF CELIBACY.

SOME ministers have carried their disinterestedness to so high a pitch, that they have refused to enter into the marriage state merely with this view; that, being free from all superfluous care and expence, they might consecrate

their persons more entirely to the Lord, and their possessions less reservedly to the support of the poor, whom they considered as their children, and adopted their heirs. But all pastors are not called to follow these rare examples of abstinence and disinterested piety.

When we examine into the life of a celebrated man, we generally enquire, whether he passed his days in a state of marriage or celibacy, and what it was, that determined his choice to the one or the other of these states. Such an enquiry is peculiarly necessary with respect to St. Paul, as many of the faithful, in the earliest ages of the church, deluded by the amiable appearance of celibacy, embraced the monastic life—a state, to which the clergy and the religious of the Romish church still dedicate themselves: whence those disgraceful accusations, which divers philosophers have preferred against the christian religion, as destructive of society in its very origin, which is the conjugal bond. But, leaving the reveries of legend, if we seek for christianity in the pure Gospel of Christ, we shall find this accusation to be totally groundless: since one view of the christian Legislator, in publishing that Gospel, was to strengthen the nuptial tie, by declaring, that an immodest glance is a species of adultery, by revoking the permission formerly given to the husband to put away his wife for any temporary cause of dissatisfaction, and by absolutely forbidding divorce, except in cases of adultery. Nay, so far did this divine Lawgiver carry his condescension in honour of the marriage state, that he was present at one of those solemn feasts, which were usually held upon such occasions, attended by the holy virgin and his twelve disciples; and not content with giving this public testimony of his respect for so honourable an institution, he accompanied it with the first miraculous proof of his almighty power.

St. Paul, it is true, passed the whole of his life in a state of celibacy; but he never enjoined it to any person; and if he occasionally recommended it to some, to whom it was indifferent, whether they married or not, it was chiefly on account of the distress and persecution of those times. To engage the most pious persons ordinarily to live in a state of celibacy, is not less contrary to nature and reason, than to the Spirit of the Gospel. This is to oppose the propagation of the best christians, and the most faithful subjects; it is

to suppose, that those persons, who join example to precept in the cause of virtue, and who for that very reason are peculiarly qualified for the education of children, are the only persons in the world, who ought to have none. The absurdity of this opinion constrained the Apostle Paul publicly to combat it, by declaring to the Hebrews, that *Marriage, and the bed undefiled, are honourable among all men.* He further affirmed, that *a Bishop must be the husband of one wife, one that ruleth well his own house having his children in subjection with all gravity.* And if he wished the Corinthians to continue in the state, which he himself had chosen, on account of the peculiar advantages accruing from it, at that season, to the persecuted members of the christian church; *nevertheless to avoid fornication* he counselled, that *every man should have his own wife, and every woman her own husband, I will, saith he to Timothy, that the younger women marry, bear children, and guide the house.* And lastly, he cautioned the same christian Bishop against the error of those, who, in the last times, should *depart from the faith, giving heed to the doctrines of Devils and forbidding to marry*; earnestly exhorting his young successor, to guard the brethren against a doctrine, so fatal to the church in particular, and so destructive of society in general.

But it may be urged—If St. Paul really entertained such high ideas of marriage, and represented it as the most perfect emblem of that strict union, which subsists betwixt Christ and his church; why did he not recommend it by his example? I answer—Although St. Paul was never married yet, he expressly asserted his right to that privilege as well as St. Peter and some others of the Apostles; intimating, at the same time, that prudence and charity inclined him to forego his right in that respect. When a man is perpetually called to travel from place to place, prudence requires, that he should not encumber himself with those domestic cares, which must occasion many unavoidable delays in the prosecution of his business: or, if he derives his maintenance from the generosity of the poor, charity should constrain him to burden them as little as possible. This zealous Apostle could not prevail upon himself to expose a woman and children to those innumerable dangers, which he was constantly obliged to encounter. The first peril, from which he made his escape, was that, which compelled him to descend from

the wall of Damascus in a basket : now if a family had shared with him the same danger, what an addition would they have made to his affliction and his care ! Is it not evident, that, in such circumstances, every man, who is not obliged to marry from reasons either physical or moral, is called to imitate the example of this disinterested Apostle, from the same motives of prudence and charity ? this indefatigable preacher, always on a mission, judged it advisable to continue in a single state to the end of his days : but, had he been fixed in a particular church : had he there felt, how much it concerns a minister, neither to tempt others, nor be tempted himself ; and had he known, how much assistance a modest, provident, and pious woman is capable of affording a pastor, by inspecting the women of his flock—he would then probably have advised every resident pastor to enter into the marriage state, provided they should fix upon regenerate persons, capable of edifying the church, in imitation of Phebe, a deaconness of Cenchrea, and Persis, who was so dear to St. Paul on account of her labours in the Lord ; or copying the example of those four virgins the daughters of Philip, who edified, exhorted, and consoled the faithful by their pious discourses.

The christian doctrine on this point may be reduced to the following heads. 1. In times of great trouble, and grievous persecutions, the followers of Christ should abstain from marriage, unless obliged thereto by particular and powerful reasons. 2. The faithful, who mean to embrace the nuptial state, should be careful, on no account to connect themselves with any persons, except such as are remarkable for their seriousness and piety. 3. If a man is married before he is converted ; or if, being converted, he is deceived in choosing a woman, whom he supposed to be pious, but discovers to be worldly ; instead of separating himself from his wife, in either of these cases, he is rather called to give all diligence in bringing her acquainted with the truth, as it is in Jesus. 4. Missionaries ought not to marry unless there be an absolute necessity. 5. A Bishop, or resident pastor is usually called to the marriage state. Lastly. A minister of the Gospel, who is able to live in a state of celibacy *for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake*, that he may have no other care, except that of preaching the Gospel, and attending upon the members of Christ's mystical body : such a one is un-

doubtedly called to continue in a single state. For, having obtained the gift of continence, he is dispensed from carnally giving children to the church, because he begets her spiritual sons and daughters : and such a one, instead of being honoured as the head of a particular household, should be counted worthy of double honour, as a spiritual father in his Lord's family.

TRAIT XXX.

THE ARDOUR OF HIS LOVE.

THE passions are the springs, by which we are usually actuated. Reason alone is too weak to put us in motion, so often as duty requires ; but when love, that sacred passion of the faithful, comes in to its assistance, we are then sweetly constrained to act in conformity to the various relations we sustain in civil and religious life. Thus the God of nature has rooted in the hearts of mothers a fond affection, which keeps them anxiously attentive to the wants of their children ? and thus the spirit of God implants in the bosom of a good pastor that ardent charity, which excites him to watch over his flock with the most affectionate and unwearied attention. The love of a father to his son, the attachment of a nurse to her foster-child, the tender affection of a mother to her infant, are so many emblems employed in the Holy Scriptures, to set forth the sweetness and ardour of that Christian love, which animates the true minister to the performance of his several duties. ‘You know, says St. Paul, how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children—We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children : so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. God is my record, how greatly I long after you all, in the bowels of Jesus Christ. Receive us : for ye are in our hearts to die and live with you.’ Worldly pastors can form no idea of that ardent charity, which dictates such benevolent language, and accompanies it with actions, which demonstrate

its sincerity. This is one of those mysterious things which are perfectly incomprehensible to the natural man, and which frequently appear to him as the extremest folly. This fervent love improves us into new creatures, by the sweet influence it maintains over all our tempers. This holy passion deeply interests the faithful pastor in the concerns of his fellow-christians, and teaches him to rejoice in the benefits they receive, as though his own prosperity was inseparably connected with theirs. *I thank my God* writes the great Apostle to the benefactor of his brethren, 'making mention of thee always in my prayers, hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; that the communication of thy faith may become effectual, by the acknowledging of every good thing, which is in you in Christ Jesus. For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.' The sorrow and the joy of this zealous imitator of Christ were generally influenced by the varying states of the faithful. When any, who had once ran well, were seen loitering by the way, or starting aside from the path of life, he expressed the most sincere affliction on their account—*There are some, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.* On the other hand, the progress of believers was as marrow to his bones, and as the balsam of life to his heart—*'We are glad, when we are weak and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection. My brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. Be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, holding forth the word of life: that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.'*

Reader, whoever thou art, permit me to ask thee one important question. Art thou acquainted with that ardent charity, that influenced the Apostle Paul? If his christian love was like a rapid and deep river; is thine, at least, like a running stream, whose waters fail not? Do thy joys and thy sorrows flow in the same channel, and tend to the same point as the sanctified passions of this benevolent man? Relate the chief causes of thy satisfaction and thy displeasure, and I will tell thee, whether like Demas, thou art a child of this present world, or a fellow-citizen of Heaven with St. Paul.

TRAIT XXXI.

HIS GENEROUS FEARS AND SUCCEEDING CONSOLATIONS.

WHEN the church is threatened with a storm, the worldly pastor has no fears except for himself and his relations. But the true minister, if he is at all disquieted with fear, when the Lord's vessel is driven with the winds, or appears to be in danger through the indiscreet conduct of false or unloving brethren, he feels much less for his own safety, than for the security of his companions in tribulation. He fears especially for the weak of the flock, and for those of the faithful, who are exposed to violent temptation: and these generous fears, which equally prove his holy zeal and his brotherly love, without robbing him of all his joy, afford him frequent opportunities of exercising his faith, his resignation and his hope. *We were troubled*, saith St. Paul, 'on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. I fear, lest when I come, I shall not find you such as I would. When we could no longer forbear, we sent Timothy to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith, that no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know, that we are appointed thereunto. For verily, when we were with you, we told you before, that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass. For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.'

Though these *fightings without*, and these *fears within*, are always painful to the flesh, yet they are as constantly beneficial to the soul. If they subject the true minister for a season to the keenest affliction, they prepare him in the end for *strong consolation*. Observe the manner, in which the great Apostle expresses himself upon this point — 'We would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble, which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above

strength, infomuch that we despaired even of life. We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead : who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver : in whom we trust, that he will yet deliver us. I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things, which happened unto me, have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel ; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places : and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Hence, we glory in tribulations : knowing that tribulation worketh patience ; and patience, experience ; and experience, hope : and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. Blessed be God, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort ; who comforteth us in our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.'

If those who are honoured with a commission to publish the Gospel were fully convinced how gracious and powerful a Master they serve, instead of being alarmed at the sight of those labours and dangers, which await them in the exercise of their ministry, they would stand prepared to run all hazards in his service ; as courageous soldiers, who fight under the eye of a generous prince, are ready to expose their lives for the augmentation of his glory. Can it become good pastors to manifest less concern for the salvation of their brethren, than mercenary warriors for the destruction of their prince's foes ? And if the Romans generously exposed themselves to death, in preserving the life of a fellow-citizen, for the trifling reward of a civic wreath, how much greater magnanimity should a christian pastor discover in rescuing the souls of his brethren from a state of perdition, for the glorious reward of a never-fading crown ?

TRAIT XXXII.

THE GRAND SUBJECT OF HIS GLORRYING
AND THE EVANGELICAL MANNER IN
WHICH HE MAINTAINED HIS SUPERIO-
RITY OVER FALSE APOSTLES.

THE disposition of a faithful pastor is, in every respect, diametrically opposite to that of a worldly minister. If you observe the conversation of an ecclesiastic, who is influenced by the spirit of the world, you will hear him intimating either that he has, or that he would not be sorry to have, the precedency among his brethren, to live in a state of affluence and splendour, and to secure to himself such distinguished appointments as would increase both his dignity and his income, without making any extraordinary addition to his pastoral labours: you will find him anxious to be admitted into the best companies, and occasionally forming parties for the chase or some other vain amusement. While the true pastor cries out in the self-renouncing language of the great Apostle: ‘God forbid, that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.’

If the minister, who is really formed to preside in the church, was singled out from among his brethren, and placed in an Apostolic chair, he would become the more humble for his exaltation:—if such a one was slighted and vilified by false Apostles, he would not appeal, for the honour of his character, to the superiority of his talents, his rank, or his mission; but rather to the superiority of his labours, his dangers, and his sufferings. Thus, at least, St. Paul defending the dignity of his character against the unjust insinuations of his adversaries in the ministry—*Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more.* But in what manner did he attempt to prove this? Was it by saying, I have a richer benefice than the generality of ministers; I am a doctor, a professor of divinity, I bear the mitre, and dwell in an episcopal palace? No: instead of this, he used the following apostolic language. ‘In labours I am more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

In journeyings often, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils by the heathen, in perils among false brethren : In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things, that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak ? who is offended and I burn not ? If I must needs glory, I will glory in the things, which concern mine infirmities. From henceforth let no man trouble me : for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.' Such are the appeals of holy prelates. But for a man to glory in having obtained a deanery, a professor's chair, or a bishoprick, is in reality to boast of his unfaithfulness to his vocation, and to prove himself unworthy of the rank, to which he has been injudiciously raised.

Ye who preside over the household of God, learn of the Apostle Paul to manifest your real superiority. Surpass your inferiors in humility, in charity, in zeal, in your painful labours for the salvation of sinners, in your invincible courage to encounter those dangers, which threaten your brethren, and by your unwearied patience in bearing those persecutions, which the faithful disciples of Christ are perpetually called to endure from a corrupt world. Thus shall you honourably replace the first christian prelates, and happily restore the church to its primitive dignity.

TRAIT XXXIII.

HIS PATIENCE AND FORTITUDE UNDER THE SEVEREST TRIALS.

CHARITY is not easily provoked ; but on the contrary *thinketh no evil*. Full of patience and meekness, Christ distinguished himself by his abundant love to those from whom he received the most cruel treatment. Thus also the ministers of Christ are distinguished, who, as they are more or less courageous and indefatigable in the work of the ministry, are enabled to adopt the following declaration of St. Paul with more or less propriety : ' Being reviled, we bless ; being persecuted, we suffer it ; being defamed, we en-

treat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are as the off-scouring of all things unto this day. Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: but in all things approving ourselves, as the ministers of God in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings, by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,' which enables us to attack error and vice, while it shields us from their assaults; 'by honour and dishonour; by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.'

Far from being discouraged by the trials, which befall him, the true minister is disposed in such circumstances to pray with the greater fervency; and according to the ardour and constancy of his prayers, such are the degrees of fortitude and patience, to which he attains. 'We have not received, saith St. Paul, the spirit of bondage again to fear; but we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The spirit itself, amidst all our distresses, beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. I besought the Lord thrice that this trial might depart from me. And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me.'

What an advantage, what an honour is it, to labour in the service of so gracious and powerful a Master! By the power, with which he controls the world, he overrules all things for *good to them, that love him*. Their most pungent sorrows are succeeded by peculiar consolations; the reproach of the cross prepares them for the honours of a crown; and the

flames in which they are sometimes seen to blaze, become like that chariot of fire, which conveyed Elijah triumphantly away from the fury of Jezebel.

TRAIT XXXIV.

HIS MODEST FIRMNESS BEFORE MAGISTRATES.

SUPPORTED by a strong persuasion, that God and truth are on his side, the faithful minister is carried above all those disheartening fears, which agitate the hearts of worldly pastors. Depending upon the truth of that solemn prediction; *They will deliver you up to the council, and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the gentiles*; he expects in times of persecution to appear before magistrates, and possibly before kings, for the cause of Christ and his Gospel. Nor is he afflicted at such a prospect. Relying on the promise of that compassionate Redeemer, who once appeared for him before Annas and Caiaphas, Herod and Pontius Pilate, without anxiously premeditating what he shall answer, and resting assured, that wisdom shall be given him in every time of need, he cries out with the holy determination of the Psalmist: *I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.*

When he is brought as a malefactor before the judge: while his accusers, actuated by malicious zeal, agree to say—*We have found this man a pestilent fellow, a mover of sedition among the people*, and one of the ringleaders of a new and dangerous sect; he justifies himself by answering—The witnesses, who appear against me this day, neither found me trampling under foot the authority of my superiors, nor sowing the seeds of sedition among the people; ‘neither can they prove the things, whereof they now accuse me. But this I confess, that after the way, which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things, which are written in the Law and the Prophets; and have hope toward God, which they themselves allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.’

And supposing his accusers are not only deists, but professors of the christian faith, he will add : This also I confess, that in conformity to those principles, which pretended philosophers term *superstitious*, and which lukewarm christians call *enthusiastic*, *I believe not only in God the Father Almighty, but also in Jesus Christ his only Son whom I acknowledge to be King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, and who after having suffered for our sins, rose again for our justification.* Further ; I joyfully subscribe to that confession of faith which is frequently in your own mouths—*I believe in the Holy Ghost, who regenerates and sanctifies every true member of the holy catholic church ; and I participate with those members the common advantages of our most holy faith, which are an humble consciousness of the forgiveness of sins, a lively hope of the resurrection of the body, and a sweet anticipation of everlasting life. And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men.* If his judge already prejudiced against him, should unbecomingly join issue with his accusers, and charge him with extravagance and fanaticism ; he will answer after St. Paul, with all due respect, ‘ I am not mad ; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. And I would to God, that not only thou, but also all who hear me this day were altogether such as I am, except these bonds.’

After a pastor has had experience of these difficult trials, he is then in a situation to confirm younger ministers in the manner of St. Paul— ‘ I know, whom I have believed, and I am persuaded, that he is able to keep, that which I have committed unto him, against that day. At my first answer, no man stood with me ; but all men forsook me : Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me ; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear the Gospel ; and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his Heavenly Kingdom : to whom be glory for ever and ever.’

Behold the inconveniences and dangers to which not only christian pastors, but all, who follow the steps of the Apostle Paul, will be exposed in every place where the bigoted or the incredulous occupy the first posts in church or state ! And whether we are called to endure *torments*, or only to

suffer *reproach* in the cause of truth, let us endeavour to support the sufferings, that shall fall to our lot, with that resolution and meekness, of which St. Paul and his adorable Master have left us such memorable examples.

TRAIT XXXV.

HIS COURAGE IN CONSOLING HIS PERSECUTED BRETHREN.

PERSUADED, that *all, who will live godly in Christ Jesus*, and particularly his ministers, *shall suffer persecution*, the good pastor looks for opposition from every quarter; and whenever he suffers for the testimony he bears to the truths of the Gospel, he suffers not only with resolution, but with joy.

The more the God of this degenerate world exalts himself in opposition to truth, the more he disposes every sincere heart for the reception of it. The Gospel is that everlasting rock, upon which the church is founded, and against which *the gates of Hell* can never prevail: and though this rock is assailed by innumerable hosts of visible and invisible enemies, yet their repeated assaults serve only to demonstrate, with increasing certainty, its unshaken firmness and absolute impenetrability. A clear sight of the *sovereign good*, as presented to us in the Gospel, is sufficient to make it universally desirable. The vail of inattention, however, conceals in a great measure this *sovereign good*, and the mists of prejudice entirely obscure it. But by the inhuman conduct of the persecutors of christianity, their false accusations, their secret plots, and their unexampled cruelty, these mists are frequently dissipated, and these vails rent in twain from the top to the bottom. Error is by these means unwittingly exposed to the view of the world; while every impartial observer attracted by the charms of persecuted truth, examines into its nature, acknowledges its excellence, and at length triumphs in the possession of that inestimable pearl, which he once despised. Thus the tears of the faithful and the blood of confessors have been generally found to scatter and nourish the seed of the Kingdom.

Ye zealous defenders of truth ! let not the severest persecutions alarm your apprehension or weaken your confidence ; since every trial of this kind must necessarily terminate in your own advantage, as well as in the establishment and glory of the christian faith. Error, always accompanied with contradictions, and big with absurd consequences, will shortly appear to be supported by no other prop, than that of prejudice or passion, or the despotism of a usurped authority, which renders itself odious by the very means employed for its support. The more the partisans of every false doctrine sound the alarm against you, the more they resemble a violent multitude opposing the efforts of a few, who are labouring to extinguish the fire, that consumes their neighbours' habitations : the different conduct of the one and the other must, sooner or later, manifest the incendiaries. Error may be compared to a vessel of clay, and truth to a vase of massy gold. In vain is calumny endeavouring to render the truth contemptible by overheaping it with every thing that is abominable ; in vain would prejudice give error an amiable appearance by artfully concealing its defects : for whenever the hand of persecution shall furiously hurl the latter against the former, the solid gold will sustain the shock unhurt, while the varnished clay shall be dashed in pieces. The experience, however, of seventeen ages has not been sufficient to demonstrate to persecutors a truth so evident ; nor are there wanting inexperienced believers in the church, who are ready to call it in question, and who, *when persecution ariseth because of the word*, are unhappily observed to lose their christian resolution. But, ' why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing, the kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed ? He that dwelleth in Heaven shall laugh them to scorn,' and make their malice serve to the accomplishment of his great designs.

Thus the Jews, in crucifying Christ, contributed to lay the grand foundation of the christian church : and afterwards by persecuting the Apostle Paul to death, gave him an opportunity of bearing the torch to Rome, and even into the palaces of its emperors. And it was from Rome itself, as from the jaws of a devouring lion, that he comforted the faithful, who were ready to faint at his afflictions, and encourage them to act in conformity to their glorious vocation. ' I suffer trouble as an evil doer, even unto bonds ; but

the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying; For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel, according to the power of God: who hath called us according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel: whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an Apostle, for the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless, I am not ashamed. Thou, therefore, endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.'

Happy is the faithful minister of Christ amid all the severe afflictions to which he is sometimes exposed! Though *troubled on every side*, yet he is *not distressed*; though *perplexed*, yet *not in despair*; though *persecuted*, yet *not forsaken*; though *cast down*, yet *not destroyed*. All the violent attacks of his enemies must finally contribute to the honour of his triumph, while their flagrant injustice gives double lustre to the glorious cause, in which he suffers.



TRAIT XXXVI.

HIS HUMBLE CONFIDENCE IN PRODUCING THE SEALS OF HIS MINISTRY.

A PASTOR must sooner or later, convert sinners, if he sincerely and earnestly calls them to repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, though filled with indignation against sin, with compassion toward the impenitent, and with gratitude to Christ, he should, like St. Paul, in proportion to his strength, wrestle with God by prayer, with sinners by exhortation, and with the flesh by abstinence; yet even then, as much unequal to that Apostle, as he was unequal to his Master, he may reasonably despair of frequently beholding the happy

effects of his evangelical labours. But, if he cannot adopt the following apostolic language : *Thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest, the favour of his knowledge by us in every place* : he will, at least, be able to say in his little sphere—‘ We are unto God a sweet favour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them, that perish : to the one we are the favour of death unto death ; and to the other, the favour of life unto life.’ If he has not, like St. Paul, planted new vines, he is engaged, with Apollos, in watering those, which are already planted ; he is rooting up some withered cumberers of the ground, he is lopping off some unfruitful branches, and propping up those tender sprigs, which the tempest has beaten down.

He would be the most unhappy of all faithful ministers, had he not some in his congregation, to whom he might with propriety address himself in the following terms : ‘ Do we need epistles of commendation to you ? Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God ; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. Are not ye my work in the Lord ? If I be not an Apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you : for the seal of mine Apostleship are ye in the Lord. For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers : for in Christ Jesus have I begotten you through the Gospel.’

When a minister of the Gospel, after labouring for several years in the same place, is unacquainted with any of his flock, to whom he might modestly hold the preceding language ; it is to be feared, that he has laboured too much like the generality of pastors in the present day : since *the word of God*, when delivered with earnestness and without adulteration, is usually ‘ quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow. He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully : what is the chaff to the wheat ? saith the Lord. Is not my word like a fire ; and like a hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces ? Behold I am against them, that cause my people to err by their lies and by their lightness : therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord.’

Those ministers, who are anxious so to preach, and so to conduct themselves, as neither to trouble the peace of the formal, nor to alarm the fears of the impenitent, are undoubtedly the persons peculiarly alluded to in the following solemn passage of Jeremiah's prophecy: 'Mine heart within me is broken, because of the prophets; all my bones, shake because of the Lord, and because of the words of his holiness. For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the Lord. They walk in lies,' either actually or doctrinally: 'they strengthen also the hands of evil doers, that none doth return from his wickedness. From the prophets of Jerusalem is prophane-ness gone forth into all the land. They speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord. They say unto them, that secretly despise me, The Lord hath said, ye shall have peace: and they say unto every one, that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you. I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings.'

Behold the reason, why nothing can so much afflict a faithful minister, as not to behold from time to time, unfeigned conversions effected among the people by means of his ministry. The husbandman, after having diligently prepared and plentifully sowed his fields, is sensibly afflicted, when he sees the hopes of his harvest all swept away at once by a furious storm: but he feels not so lively a sorrow as the charitable pastor, who after having liberally scattered around him the seeds of wisdom and piety, beholds his parish overrun with the noxious weeds of vanity and vice. If Nabals are still intoxicated; if Cains are still implacable; if Ananiases are still deceitful, and Sapphiras still prepared to favour their deceit; if Marthas are still cumbered with earthly cares; if Dinahs are still exposing themselves to temptation, even to the detriment of their honour, and to the loss of that little relish, which they once discovered for piety; and if the formal still continue to approach God with their lips while their hearts are far from him—a good pastor at the sight of these things is pierced through with many sorrows, and feels, in a degree, what Elijah felt, when, overburdened with fa-

tigue and chagrin, *he sat down under a juniper tree, and said ; It is enough ; now, O Lord, take away my life : for I am not better than my fathers.*

Indifference, in a matter of so great importance, is one of the surest marks by which an unworthy pastor may be discerned. Of what consequence is it to a worldly minister, whether the flock, about which he takes so little trouble, is composed of sheep or goats ? He seeks not so much to benefit his people, as to discharge the more exterior duties of his office in such a way, as may not incur the censure of his superiors in the church, who, possibly, are not a whit less lukewarm than himself. And if a tolerable party of his unclean flock do but disguise themselves three or four times in a year, for the purpose of making their appearance at the sacramental table, he is perfectly satisfied with the good order of his parish ; especially, when the most detestable vices, such as extortion, theft, adultery, or murder, are not openly practised in it. This outward kind of decency, which is so satisfactory to the worldly minister, and which is ordinarily effected by the constraining force of the civil laws, rather than by the truths of the Gospel, affords the faithful pastor but little consolation. He is solicitous to see his people hungering and thirsting after righteousness, working out their salvation with fear and trembling, and engaging in all the duties of christianity, with as much eagerness, as the children of the world pursue their shameful pleasures or trifling amusements : and if he has not yet enjoyed this satisfaction, he humbles himself before God, and anxiously enquires after the reason of so great an unhappiness. He is conscious, that if his ministry is not productive of good fruit, the sterility of the word must flow from one or other of the following causes—either he does not publish the Gospel in its full latitude and purity, in a manner sufficiently animating, or in simplicity and faith : perhaps he is not careful to second his zealous discourses by an exemplary conduct : perhaps he is negligent in imploring the blessing of God upon his public and private labours : or probably his hearers may have conceived inveterate prejudices against him, which make them inattentive to his most solemn exhortations ; so that instead of being received among them as an ambassador of Christ, he can apply to himself the proverb, formerly cited by his rejected Master : *No prophet is accepted in his own country*, where he is ac-

customed to be seen without ceremony, and heard without curiosity. If the fault appears to be on his own side, he endeavours to apply the most speedy and efficacious remedies, redoubling his public labours, and renewing his secret supplications with more than ordinary fervour of spirit. But if, after repeated trials, he is convinced, that his want of success chiefly flows from the invincible hatred of his flock to the truths of the Gospel, or from the sovereign contempt, which his parishoners manifest both for his person and his labours; he is then justified in following the example of his unerring Master, who refused to exercise his ministry in those places where prejudice had locked up the hearts of the people against the reception of his evangelical precepts.

When, in such a situation, a pastor is fearful of following the example of our Lord, lest he should be left destitute of a maintenance, in how deplorable a state must he drag through the wearisome days of a useless life! If every sincere christian is ready to take up his cross, to quit friends and possessions, to renounce life itself, on account of the Gospel; can we consider that minister, as a man really consecrated to the service of Christ, who has not resolution sufficient to give up a house, a garden, and a salary, when the welfare of his own soul and the interests of the church requires such a sacrifice?

When a preacher of the Gospel counts less upon the promises of his Master, than upon the revenues of his benefice, may we not reasonably conclude, that he is walking in the footsteps of Balaam, rather than of St. Paul? And is it for such a man, to *declare* the *statutes* of the Lord, or to recite the words of his *covenant*? Attempting to publish, before he effectually believes, the truths of the Gospel? And has he not a front of brass, when, with the dispositions of a Demas, he mounts the pulpit, to celebrate the bounty of that God, who supplies the little wants of *sparrows*, who feeds the young *ravens* that call upon him, opening his hand and filling all things living with *plenteousness*? Let such a one consider, that the character of a virtuous preceptor, or an honest tradesman, is abundantly more honourable than that of a mercenary priest.

In general, it may be reasonably supposed, that if a pastor faithfully exercises his ministry in any place, to which he has been appointed by the providence of God, he will either

benefit those among whom he is called to labour, or his hardened hearers will, at length, unite to drive him from among them, as the inhabitants of Nazareth forced Jesus away from their ungrateful city. Or if he should not be forcibly removed from his post, as was the case of our Lord in the country of the Gadarenes, yet believing it incumbent upon him to retire from such a part, he will seek out some other place in his Master's vineyard, that shall better repay the pains of cultivation; whatever such a removal may cost him in the judgment of the world. And, indeed, such a mode of conduct was positively prescribed by our Lord to his first ministers, in the following solemn charge: *Into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words; when, flighted and reproached by its unworthy inhabitants, ye are constrained to depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet, as a testimony against those, who prefer the maxims of the world before the precepts of the Gospel.*

If any pastor refuses to adopt this method of proceeding, after patience has had its perfect work; if he still fears to give up an establishment, as the sons-in-law of Lot were afraid of forsaking their possessions in Sodom, he then acts in direct opposition to the command of Christ; he obstinately occupies the place of a minister, against whom, very probably, less prejudice might be entertained, and whose ministry, of consequence, would be more likely to produce some salutary effect; he loses his time in casting pearls before swine; and instead of converting his parishoners, he only aggravates the condemnation due to their obduracy.

The faithful pastor, however, is not soon discouraged, though he beholds no beneficial consequences of his ministry. His unbounded charity suffers, hopes, and labours long, without fainting. The more sterile the soil appears, which he is called to cultivate, the more he waters it, both with his tears and with the sweat of his brow; the more he implores for it *the dew of Heaven*, and the influences of that divine Sun, which spreads light and life through every part of the church. It is not, therefore, (let it be repeated) till after *patience* has had *its perfect work*, that a conscientious minister takes the final resolution of quitting his post, in order to seek out some other situation, in which his labours may be attended with greater profit.

TRAIT XXXVII.

*HIS READINESS TO SEAL WITH HIS BLOOD
THE TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL.*

HE, who is not yet prepared to die for his Lord, has not yet received that *perfect love*, which *casteth out fear*; and it is a matter of doubt, whether any preacher is worthy to appear in a pulpit, whose confidence in the truths of the Gospel is not strong enough to dispose him, in certain situations, to seal those truths with his blood. If he really shrinks from the idea of dying in the cause of christianity, is it for him to publish a Saviour, who is *the resurrection and the life*? And may he not be said to play with his conscience, his auditors, and his God, if, while he is the slave of sin and fear, he presents himself as a witness of the salvation of that omnipotent Redeemer, who, *through death, has destroyed him, that had the power of death*; and who, by his resurrection, has *delivered them, who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage*. Love, in the language of Solomon, is *strong as death*: but the true minister glows with that fervent love to Christ and his brethren, which is abundantly *stronger* than those fears of death, which would prevent him, in times of persecution, from the faithful discharge of his ministerial functions. Such was the love of St. Paul, when he cried out to those, who would have dissuaded him from the dangerous path of duty: ‘What mean ye to weep, and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things, that shall befall me there; save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus. For I know, that this shall turn to my salvation, through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ: according to my earnest expectation, that Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death. For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. And

if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all.'

Thus *The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep : but he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth ; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.* Happy is that church, whose pastor is prepared to tread in the steps of *the great shepherd and bishop of souls !* St. Paul would not have been ashamed to acknowledge such a one, as his companion and fellow-labourer in the work of the Lord.

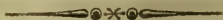
TRAIT XXXVIII.

THE SWEET SUSPENSE OF HIS CHOICE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.

WHATEVER desire the faithful pastor may have to be with Christ, and to rest from his labours ; yet he endures with joy his separation from the person of his Saviour, through the sacred pleasure he experiences in the service of his members. The sweet equilibrium, in which his desire was suspended between life and death, is thus expressed by the Apostle Paul : ' We know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens. For in this we groan earnestly ; desiring to be clothed upon with our house, which is from Heaven : knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. Yet, what I shall choose, I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ ; which is far better : nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know, that I shall abide and continue with you all, for your furtherance and joy of faith.'

It is chiefly, when believers have the unconquerable love of St. Paul, *that all things work together for their good.* Whether they live, or whether they die, every occurrence turns out a matter of favour. If they live ; it is, that they may support their companions in tribulation, and insure to themselves a greater reward, by maintaining for a longer season,

the victorious fight of faith—if they die; it is, that they may rest from their labours, and come to a more perfect enjoyment of their Master's presence. *Blessed are the dead, which die in the Lord; they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.* And in the mean-time, blessed are the living, who live in the Lord: for they are honourably engaged in those important conflicts, which will daily add to their spiritual strength, and augment the brilliancy of their final triumph.



TRAIT XXXIX.

THE CONSTANCY OF HIS ZEAL AND DILIGENCE TO THE END OF HIS COURSE.

LIVING or dying, the faithful servant of Christ never acts unworthy of his character. *Blameless and harmless in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, a child of God, without rebuke, he shines, to the end of his course, as a light in the world.* He beholds death, whether it be natural or violent, always without fear, and generally with pleasure, regarding it as a messenger appointed for his safe conduct into that glorious state, where they rejoice together, who have continued faithful to the end. He is anxious only, that his Lord may find him occupied in the grand business, he was commissioned to perform: and the nearer his hour approaches, the more earnest he is, that he may finish his ministry with joy. If he is no longer able to exhort the brethren in person, he writes to them in the manner of St. Peter: ‘I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, the doctrines, precepts, threatenings, and promises of the Gospel, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing, that shortly I must put off this tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.’ He desires at such a season, to address the faithful, and especially young ministers, as St. Paul addressed the Corinthians and Timothy: ‘My beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know,

that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. Thou, Timothy, hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all, that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry; for I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.'

Thus triumphantly St. Paul advanced toward the end of his course. And thus the faithful minister, pouring fresh oil into his lamp as the night advances, goes forth to meet his approaching God, whom his faith already considers as a faithful Judge, and his hope as a munificent Rewarder.



TRAIT XL.

HIS TRIUMPH OVER THE EVILS OF LIFE, AND THE TERRORS OF DEATH.

THE living faith, that sustains a good pastor, or a believer in Christ, amid all the difficulties and afflictions of life, causes him more especially to triumph at the approach of death in all its terrific appearances. Ever filled with an humble confidence in him, who is the *Resurrection* and the *Life*, he frequently expresses the assurance of his victorious faith, at this solemn season, in the manner of St. Paul; 'Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ. Knowing, that he, who raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you; therefore, we faint not: but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' Thus holding up the shield of faith, to quench the fiery darts of the wicked one, and to receive the piercing arrows of the angel of death, he expects his last hour without fear or impatience; cheerfully leaving the time, the place, the manner, and the circumstances of this concluding trial, to the disposal of that

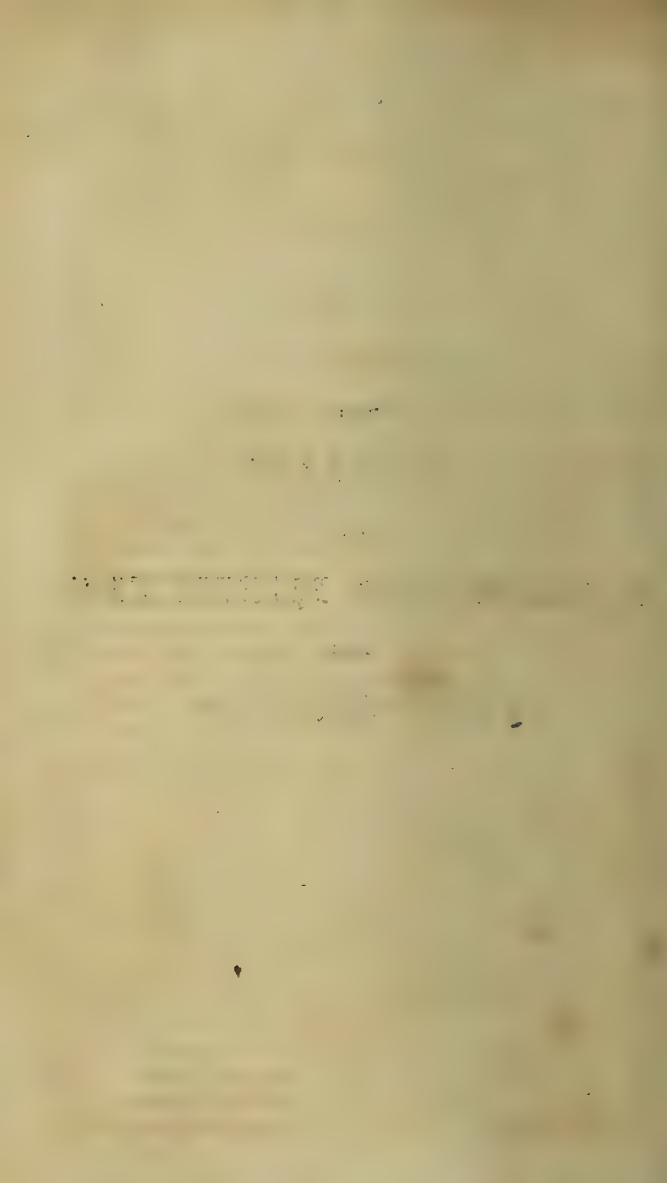
GOD, whose wisdom, goodness, and power, are all combined to insure him the victory. Whether he is called by the providence of GOD, in a chamber, or upon a scaffold, to taste the bitter cup, of which his Master drank so deeply, he prepares himself to accompany a suffering Saviour, encouraged with the hope, that he shall not be tempted above his strength, and that, if he suffers and dies with the King of glory, he shall also rise and reign together with him.

At length the fatal shaft is thrown, whether by accident, by disease, or by the hand of an executioner is of little consequence ; the true christian, prepared for all events, sees and submits to the order of providence. He receives the mortal blow, either with *humble resignation*, or with *holy joy*. In the first case, his soul is sweetly disengaged from its earthly tabernacle, while he breathes out the supplicatory language of happy Simeon: *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation*. But in the second case, he leaves the world in a state of holy triumph, crying out in the fullest assurance of faith—my persuasion takes place of sight, and without the help of vision I endure as seeing him that is invisible ; as effectually sustained, as though contemplating with Stephen an open Heaven, I saw the Son of Man standing at the right hand of GOD, ready to save and glorify my soul. Of these two manners of holy dying, the most enviable appears to have been the lot of St. Paul, if we may judge from the anticipated triumph he describes in several of his epistles, and particularly in the last he addressed to Timothy from Rome, where he received the crown of martyrdom. ‘ I desire to depart and to be with Christ, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give me at that day : to whom be glory for ever and ever. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or the sword ? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him, that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor Angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

Thus the great Apostle went forth to meet his last trial, counting it an honour to suffer in the cause of truth, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. The enemies of christianity rendered him at last conformable to Christ in his death: but while they severed his head from his body, they united his happy spirit more intimately to that exalted Jesus, who had once met him in the way, and who now was waiting to receive him, at the end of his course. Happy are the faithful, who, like this faithful Apostle, live unto the Lord! yet happier they, who, like him, are enabled to die unto the Lord! *Their works do follow them, while they rest from their labours*, and wait, in peace, the resurrection, and the sublime rewards of the righteous.

THE
PORTRAIT
OF
LUKEWARM MINISTERS,
AND
FALSE APOSTLES.



THE PORTRAIT, &c.

CHAPTER I.

THE PORTRAIT OF LUKEWARM MINISTERS.

THE essence of painting consists in a happy mixture of light and shade, from the contrast of which an admirable effect is produced, and the animated figure made to rise from the canvass. Upon this principle we shall oppose to the portrait of St. Paul, that of lukewarm ministers and false apostles, whose gloomy traits will form a back-ground peculiarly adapted to set off the character of an evangelical pastor.

If the primitive church was disturbed and misled by unfaithful ministers, it may be reasonably presumed, that, in this more degenerate period of its existence, the church of God must be miserably overrun with teachers of the same character. There is, however, no small number of ministers who form a kind of medium between zealous pastors and false apostles. These irresolute evangelists are sincere to a certain point. They have some desire after the things of God, but are abundantly more solicitous for the things of the world: They form good resolutions in the cause of their acknowledged Master, but are timid and unfaithful, when called upon actual service. They are sometimes actuated by a momentary zeal, but generally influenced by servile fear. They have no experience of that ardent affection and that invincible courage, with which St. Paul was animated. Their *wisdom* is still *carnal*; they still confer *with flesh and blood*. Such was Aaron, who yielded, through an unmanly weakness, to the impious solicitations of his people. Such was Jonah, when he refused to exercise his ministry at Nineveh. That this prophet was possessed of a confidence in God, and a desire for the salvation of his fellow-creatures, we have every reason

to believe : but we find, that neither the one, nor the other, was sufficiently powerful to engage him in a service, which appeared likely to endanger his reputation among men. Such were also the Apostles before they were endued with power from on high. To every pastor of this character, that expression of Christ, which was once addressed to the most courageous man among his disciples, may be considered as peculiarly applicable : *Thou art an offence unto me, for thou savourest not the things, that be of God, but those, that be of men.*

Lukewarmness, false prudence and timidity, are the chief characteristics, by which ministers of this class may be distinguished. Perceiving the excellence of the Gospel in an obscure point of view, and having little experience of its astonishing effects, they cannot possibly discover that religious zeal, which is indispensibly necessary to the character they affect to sustain.

The pious Bishop Massillon gives the following representation of these unqualified teachers, and the ill effects of their unfaithfulness. “Manners are every day becoming more corrupt among us, because the zeal of ministers is daily becoming colder ; and because there are found among us few apostolical men, who oppose themselves, as a brazen wall, to the torrent of vice. For the most part, we behold the wicked altogether at ease in their sins, for the want of hearing more frequently those thundering voices, which accompanied with the spirit of God, would effectually rouse them from their awful slumber. The want of zeal, so clearly discernable among pastors, is chiefly owing to that base timidity which is not hardy enough to make a resolute stand against common prejudice, and which regards the worthless approbation of men, beyond their eternal interests. That must needs be a worldly and criminal consideration, which makes us more anxious for our own glory, than for the glory of God. That must truly be fleshly wisdom, which can represent religious zeal under the false ideas of excess, indiscretion and temerity : a pretext this, which nearly extinguishes every spark of zeal in the generality of ministers. This want of courage they honour with the specious names of moderation and prudence. Under pretence of not carrying their zeal to an excess, they are content to be entirely destitute of it. And while they are

“solicitous to shun the rocks of imprudence and precipitation, they run, without fear, upon the sands of indolence and cowardice. They desire to become useful to sinners, and at the same time to be had in estimation by them. They long to manifest such a zeal as the world is disposed to applaud. They are anxious so to oppose the passions of men, that they may yet secure their praises; so to condemn the vices they love, that they may still be approved by those they condemn. But when we probe a wound to the bottom, we must expect to awaken a degree of peevishness in the patient, if we do not extort from him some bitter exclamation.”

“Let us not deceive ourselves,” continues the same author; “if that apostolical zeal, which once converted the world, is become so rare among us, it is because, in the discharge of our sacred functions, we seek ourselves, rather than the glory of Christ, and the salvation of souls. Glory and infamy were regarded by the apostle with equal indifference, while he filled up the duties of his important office. He knew it impossible to please men, and to save them: to be the servant of the world, and the servant of Christ. Nevertheless, there are many among us, who are seeking to unite these different services, which the apostle believed to be irreconcilable.”

Monf. Roques agrees with the pious Bishop in condemning those ministers, who neglect to copy the example of St. Paul. “The little piety, that is to be found among ministers,” says this excellent writer, “is the most effectual obstacle to the progress of the Gospel. By piety, I mean that sincere and ardent love for religion, which deeply interests a man in all its concerns, as well as in every thing, that respects the glory of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ. If this divine love was found reigning in the hearts of those who proclaim Christ; if every preacher of the Gospel was enabled to say with the sincerity of Peter, *Lord! thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee; thou knowest, that I have no ambition but for thy glory, and that my highest pleasure consists in beholding the increase of thy kingdom*—we should then perceive the word of God, in their hands, like a two-edged sword, cutting asunder the very deepest roots of sin. But as the Gospel is preached more through contention, through vain glory,

“and through the desire of getting a livelihood by serving
 “at the altar, than through an ardent zeal to advance the
 “glory of God; hence it is, that ministers fall into various
 “errors, giving evident proofs of that indolence and uncon-
 “cern, which afford matter of scandal rather than of edifi-
 “cation.”

Monf. Oftervald speaks the same language in his *Third source of the corruption, which reigns among christians*. “A great part of our ecclesiastics,” says this writer, “may be
 “justly charged with the corruption of the people, since
 “there are among them many, who oppose the re-establish-
 “ment of a holy discipline, while others render the exercise
 “of it totally useless, by an ill-timed softness, and a shame-
 “ful indulgence.”

“I except those,” continues this venerable pastor, who
 “ought to be excepted. But, on a general view, in what do
 “ecclesiastics differ from other men? Do they distinguish
 “themselves by an exemplary life? Their exterior, indeed,
 “is somewhat different; They lead a more retired life;
 “they, in some degree, save appearances, though all do not
 “go thus far, But, beyond this, are they not equally at-
 “tached to the world, as much engaged with earthly things,
 “as wholly taken up with secular views, as constantly ac-
 “tuated by interest and passion as the generality of man-
 “kind.”

Christian prudence required, that these portraits of lukewarm ministers should be exhibited, as the designs of pastors, who have been eminent for their piety, their rank, and experience, and who, on that account, had a peculiar right to declare those truths, which might give greater offence, were they to come from less respectable persons.



CHAP. II.

THE PORTRAIT OF FALSE APOSTLES.

BETWEEN the state of careless ministers, and false apostles, there is not, in reality, so vast a difference, as many are apt to imagine. An unworthy labourer in the spiritual vineyard, gives speedy proofs of a lukewarm tem-

per, in the service of his Lord ; shortly after, his heart becomes entirely cold with respect to piety, and what is still more lamentable, he frequently manifests as warm a zeal for error and vice, as the true minister can possibly discover in the cause of truth and virtue. Such is the state of those who may properly be termed preachers of the third class, and who are spoken of by St. Paul under the title of *false apostles*.

These unworthy ministers are known by their works. Like many of St. Paul's unfaithful fellow-labourers, they prefer the repose and pleasure of the world, before the service and reproach of Christ. Like Judas and Simon the forcerer, they love the honours and revenues of ministers, while they abhor the crosses and labours of the ministry. Like Hophni and Phinehas, they are *sons of Belial, and know not the Lord*. *Their sin is very great before the Lord ; for, on their account, many abhor the offering of the Lord*. Like the wicked servant, described by their reputed Master, instead of providing meat for his household in due season, they begin to smite, or to persecute those of their fellow-servants, who are intent upon discharging their several duties ; while they pass away their time in mirth and festivity *with the riotous and the drunken*. They may justly be compared to lamps extinguished in the temple of God. " Instead of shining there to his praise," says Bishop Massillon, " they emit black clouds of smoke, which obscure every object about them, and become a favour of death to those, who perish. They are pillars of the sanctuary, which being over-thrown and scattered in public places, become stones of stumbling to every heedless passenger. They are the salt of the earth, and were appointed to preserve souls from corruption ; but having lost all their favour, they begin to corrupt what they were intended to preserve." They are physicians, who carry to their patients infection instead of health. From the spiritually diseased, they withhold the healing word of God, while they distribute among them the dangerous poison of a lax morality, setting before them an example of bitter zeal *against the truth*, puffing them up with that *wisdom which is earthly, sensual, and devilish*.

" A false pastor," says Mons. Roques, or a false apostle, " is a minister whose heart is not right before God, and who lives not in such a manner as to edify his flock. He

“ knows the holy course of life, to which christians in general, and ministers in particular, are called ; but, in spite of all his knowledge and his apparent zeal, he fears not to trample under foot those very maxims of the Gospel, which he has publicly established and preached with the utmost energy. Every day he performs acts of the most detestable hypocrisy. Every time he preaches and censures, he bears open testimony against his own conduct : but he publicly accuses, without ever intending to correct himself. He is a constant declaimer against vice, in the pulpit ; but a peculiar protector of it, while he is engaged in the common concerns of life. While he exhorts his hearers to repentance, he either imagines himself above those laws, which he proposes to others on the part of God ; or he believes himself under no other necessity of holding them forth, except his known engagement to such a work, and the salary he receives for the performance of it,”

Monf. Ostervald, in a work already referred to, makes mention of these pastors in the following terms. “ How many do we see, who regard their holy vocation in no other light, than the means of procuring for them a comfortable maintenance. Are there not many, who bring a scandal upon their profession, by the licentiousness of their manners ? Do we not see them hasty and outrageous ? Do we not observe in them an extreme attachment to their own interests ? Are they careful to rule their families well ? Has it not been a subject of complaint, that they are puffed up with pride, and are implacable in their hatred ? I say nothing of many other vices and defects, which are equally scandalous in the clergy. such as vain and loose conversation, an attachment to diversion and pleasure, a worldly disposition, slothfulness, craft, injustice, and slander.

“ It is impossible to find a person,” adds Monf. Ostervald, “ surrounded with more powerful motives to piety than a man, whose ordinary occupation is to meditate upon religious things, to discourse of them among others, to reprove vice and hypocrisy, to perform divine service, to administer the holy sacraments, to visit the afflicted and the dying ; and who must one day render to God on account of the souls committed to his charge. I know not, whether it be possible to find any stronger marks of impiety and hy-

“pocriſy, than thoſe, which may be diſcovered in the character of a perſon, who, in the miſt of all theſe favourable circumſtances, is, nevertheless, an unrighteous man. Such a one may be ſaid to divert himſelf with the moſt ſacred things of religion, and to ſpend the whole of his life in performing the part of an impoſtor :—And this he does to his coſt : ſince there is no profeſſion in the world, that will more effectually ſecure a ſentence of condemnation, than that of the prieſthood, when exerciſed in ſo unfaithful a manner.”

But it is chiefly in the holy ſcriptures, where theſe unworthy paſtors are pourtrayed in ſo ſtrong a point of view, that every enquirer may readily diſcern their diſtinguiſhing features. ‘Son of man, ſaith the Lord, prophesy againſt the ſhepherds of Iſrael, and ſay unto them : Ye eat the fat, and ye cloth you with the wool, ye kill them, that are fed ; but ye feed not the flock. The diſeaſed have ye not ſtrengthened, neither have ye bound up that, which was broken, neither have ye brought again that, which was driven away, neither have ye ſought that, which was loſt : but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. Therefore thus ſaith the Lord God, behold I am againſt the ſhepherds : and I will require my flock at their hand. As Jannes, and Jambres withſtood Moſes, ſo do theſe alſo reſiſt the truth : men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. Woe unto them ; for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and periſhed in the gain-ſaying of Korah. Clouds they are without water, carried about of winds, trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots ; raging waves of the ſea, ſoaming out their own ſhame ; wandering ſtars, to whom is reſerved the blackneſs of darkneſs for ever.’

St. John has not only drawn the character, but has likewiſe given us the name of a certain tyrannical teacher, who began to diſturb the peace of the primitive church. *I wrote unto the church*, ſaith he to Gaius concerning the reception of ſtranger evangelists ; ‘but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. If I come I will remember his deeds, which he doeth, prating againſt us with malicious words : and not content therewith, neither doth he himſelf receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and caſteth them out of the church.’ Behold a ſtriking deſcription of proud and perſecuting eccleſiaſtics.

But, perhaps, the most complete description of these persons is given by our Lord himself, where he treats of worthless pastors, in general, under the particular names of scribes and pharisees. Here, a divine and impartial hand delineates the jealousy, the pride, the feigned morality, the malice, and the persecuting spirit, which characterize this class of men in every age of the world. ‘Do not ye, saith Christ, after their works: for they say and do not. All their works they do to be seen of men. They love the chief seat in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets. Woe unto you, hypocrites! for ye shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men? ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them, that are entering, to go in. Ye neglect judgment, mercy and faith. Ye outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Because ye garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,’ ye vainly imagine yourselves free from a persecuting spirit, while in other matters, as the *children of them which killed the prophets*, ye are labouring to *fill up the measure of your fathers*. *Behold I send unto you prophets and zealous preachers of the word, and some of them ye shall kill, and some of them ye shall persecute from city to city.*

We need take but a cursory view of the New Testament, for sufficient proof, that these worldly-minded scribes and these furious bigots above represented, were the very persons, who pursued the first evangelists with such deadly rancour. Nay, had it not been for Annas and Caiaphas, Herod and Pilate would silently have permitted the preaching of Jesus himself. These who were the chief men in the state, after refusing to embrace the word of God, on their own part, would most probably have contented themselves, with denying its truths, and ridiculing its followers: but they would never have passed a sentence of death, upon persons of so admirable a character, as Christ and his forerunner.

The peculiar opposers of Jesus and his disciples, were powerfully influenced by jealous pride; and with the same malignant disposition, every false apostle in the christian church is deeply infected. The prelate, whose pen we have already borrowed, gives the following lively description of this unhappy temper. “This despicable jealousy not only dishonours zeal, but supposes it extinguished in the heart.

“ It is an infamous disposition, which afflicts itself even for the conversion of sinners, and for the progress of the Gospel, when it is through the ministry of others, that God is pleased to work these miracles. The glory of God seldom interests us so much, as when our own glory appears to be mingled with his. We endure, with some kind of regret, that God should be glorified: and I will dare to add, that some of us could behold our brethren perishing, with pleasure, rather than see them rescued from death, by other labours and other talents than our own. St. Paul rejoiced to see the Gospel spread abroad, though it were by the ministry of those, who sought to disgrace him among the faithful; and Moses desired, that all his brethren might receive the gift of prophecy: but we are anxious to stand alone, and to share with no person the glory and success of the holy ministry. Every thing that eclipses our own brightness, or shines too near us, becomes insupportable, and we appear to regard the gifts of God in others, merely as a shame and reproach to ourselves.” Observe here the true source of those specious pretexts, which are professedly drawn from the order, the customs, and even from the prejudices of the world: pretexts under which we dare to oppose the zeal of our brethren, to withstand the word of God in its course, and to render the cross of the ministry more burthensome to those, who carry it further than we are disposed to do. One distinguishing mark of these turbulent evangelists, is that of being thorns in the sides of true ministers, whom they never fail to represent as deceivers or novices, causing the truest piety to wear the semblance of enthusiasm and folly. *They speak evil of the things they understand not*: and by the most malicious discourses, which have always an appearance of zeal for religion and order, they are gradually rousing anew that spirit of persecution, by which the name of Christ has been so universally disgraced in the world.

In the earliest age of the christian church, these false apostles, swelling with envy at the success of more faithful ministers, made use of every effort to render them contemptible; by giving false representations of their holy zeal and their exemplary actions. Thus they accused St. Paul of walking *according to the flesh*; and asserted, that though *his letters were weighty and powerful*, yet *his bodily presence was*

weak, and his speech contemptible. Nay, so anxious were they in seeking occasions for offence in the conduct of this Apostle, that he believed himself obliged, in the end, publicly to expose them—‘These are false apostles, says he, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing, if his ministers also be transformed, as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.’ As our Lord foresaw, that these strenuous opposers of real religion, would bring his church to the very brink of ruin, he exhorted his disciples continually to stand upon their guard against them. And the Apostles, after steadily following their Master’s important advice, were diligent in transmitting it to the latest of their followers.

One necessary remark shall conclude this chapter. In the portrait of St. Paul, we have seen that of an *evangelical pastor*: in the preceding chapter, we have marked the character of a *careless minister*; and in this, we behold the faithful representation of a *false apostle*. Let us remember, that one of these three portraits must agree, more or less, with every preacher of the Gospel. I say more or less, because the various traits here marked out, may be varied to an almost inconceivable degree. Moreover so inconstant is man, that a minister, who to-day is possessed of zeal sufficient to rank him with preachers of the first class, may to-morrow, by an unhappy remissness, sink into the second, as once did John whose surname was Mark; or even into the third, as Hymeneus and Philetus, Diotrophes and Demas. On the contrary, a man, who now discovers many of those traits, by which Saul the pharisee was once distinguished, may, ere long, become an humble imitator of the zeal and charity of Paul the Apostle.

CHAP. III.

AN ANSWER TO THE FIRST OBJECTION,
WHICH MAY BE MADE AGAINST THE POR-
TRAIT OF ST. PAUL.

OBJECTIONS are the ordinary weapons, with which error makes war upon truth, and these are sometimes so powerful, that till they are effectually repelled, we see truth deprived of its rights. The first, that will probably be advanced against the portrait of St. Paul, is this: *The model placed before us is too exalted for those, who are not endued with the miraculous gifts of St. Paul.*

To this and every other objection, we shall offer a variety of replies, in as concise a manner as possible. To the present objection, a sufficient answer has been already returned by a truly respectable author. "This excuse," says Mons. Roques, "might have some weight, if in proposing the example of Christ to persons who are honoured with the holy ministry, we insisted upon their keeping pace with the Saviour of mankind. But this excuse is altogether frivolous, when nothing more is required of ministers, than continually to place Christ as a model before their eyes, and to imitate him with all the exactness of which they are capable." "This excuse," continues he, "is still more unreasonable, when applied to Prophets and Apostles, who were men of like passions with ourselves; and who, of consequence, may be placed before us as models, whose perfections are attainable by means of the very same succours, which supported them, and which are never refused to those, who have sincere and apostolical intentions.

To the answer of this pious divine, we shall add a few observations.

1. In the Portrait of St. Paul there is found no large description of miraculous gifts, but a faithful representation of those christian virtues which are found in every believer, according to his vocation, and without which, it is impossible for us to fill up our several duties—such as *humility, faith, charity, zeal, and assiduity.*

2. The morality, which was practised by St. Paul, was

no other than the morality of the Gospel, which is the same in every age, and for every condition : whence it follows, that the moral character of this Apostle, belongs not only to all *true pastors*, but even to every *sincere believer*. If St. Paul was truly humble, charitable, and pious, his humility, his charity, and his piety, are as essential to the religion of every christian, and three angles are essential to the nature of every triangle. It is granted, that the piety of this Apostle was greater than that of a thousand other ministers, just as one triangle may be greater than that of a thousand others. But as the angles of the most diminutive triangle, are of the same quality with those, which compose a triangle of an uncommon magnitude, so the moral character of St. Paul is, with regard to essentials, the moral character of every true christian.

3. This Apostle informs us, that he was obliged to *keep his body in subjection, lest after having preached to others, he himself should be a cast-away*. This single acknowledgment sufficiently proves, that he was exposed to all those dangers with which christians are generally beset, and that he saw no way of escaping them, but by the use of those very precautions, which the weakest believer is instructed to take. Now, if St. Paul was so fearful of falling away ; if St. Peter was really seen to stumble and fall ; and if Judas, an elected Apostle, irremediably plunged himself into the depths of perdition : it is but reasonable to suppose, that, by a faithful improvement of our privileges, we may attain to a good decree of that exalted piety, from which one Apostle fell for a season, and another for ever.

4. In the whole Portrait of St. Paul, there is not a stronger trait than the eighteenth, which describes the ardour of his love for the Jews, who pursued him even to death : a *love*, that made him willing to be accursed in dying for them, as his gracious Master had been in dying for the world. Now this charity is so far from being an attainment too exalted for true ministers, that it is indiscriminately required of every professing christian. *Hereby*, saith St. John, ‘perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us : and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.’ And our Lord himself hath said, ‘By this shall all men know, that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.’ It is by a new commandment to this effect, that the morality of the Gospel is peculiarly distinguished from that of the law.

And shall we impiously attempt to enervate evangelical morality? Let us rather declare, upon all occasions, that *He who loveth not, knoweth not God.* Let us cry out with the Apostle—*If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha*: and if a man love not his brethren, he loves not the Lord Jesus; *for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen.*

On the other hand, when we love our brethren *with a pure heart fervently*; when, disposed to universal benevolence, we can look upon our very enemies with sentiments of pity and affection; we are then assuredly possessed of *that christian charity*, which forms the most brilliant trait in the moral character of St. Paul.

5. St. Paul was for three years the resident pastor of a single church. The city of Ephesus was his parish: and while he resided there, he gave an example, which every minister, by the most solemn engagements, is bound to follow; whether he be commissioned to labour in a city or a village. During two other years of his life, this Apostle was confined within narrower limits than any pastor of a parish. Shut up at Rome in a house, that served him for a prison, and constantly guarded by a soldier, he was unable to extend the sphere of his labours. Yet, even in these circumstances, he continued in the diligent exercise of the holy ministry, *preaching the Kingdom of God, to all them, that came in unto him, and teaching those things, which concern the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Surely nothing can appear more perfectly reasonable, than that every pastor should discover as much zeal in his particular parish, as St. Paul was accustomed to manifest in the Roman Empire, when he was at liberty, and in his own apartment, when loaded with chains.

6. If the ardent charity and the incessant labours of St. Paul were happily imitated by Timothy, why may they not be copied by every pastor in the present day? That youthful minister was anxious to tread in the steps of this Apostle, and they, who are otherwise minded, assuredly fall under those apostolical censures, which are thus indirectly expressed in his epistle to the Philippians: *'I trust to send Timotheus shortly unto you; for I have no man like minded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not*

the things, which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the Gospel.'

7. The destruction of the eastern churches commenced in the falling away of their pastors, who gradually abated in the fervours of that holy zeal, with which they had begun to labour in the vineyard of their Lord. Of such unfaithful teachers, Christ affectingly complained in the earliest period of his church, and accompanied his complaints with the most terrible menaces. 'Write unto the Angel of the church of Ephesus,' said he to St. John, 'I know thy former works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles and are not; and hast found them liars, &c. Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works: or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.'

The warning was unattended to, and, at length, the threatened blow was struck. Thus fell the church of Ephesus, and thus every church upon earth is fallen, making way for that *mystery of iniquity*, and that general apostacy, which have been so long foretold. So true is it, that apostolical charity, *that* charity which was first lighted up on the day of pentecost, is still absolutely necessary to every pastor, to every church, and, of consequence, to every believer.

From the combined force of these seven argumentative observations, we have a right to conclude, that the virtues of St. Paul are far from being inimitable, and that the first objection against his portrait is void of solidity.



CHAP. IV.

A SECOND OBJECTION ARGUED AGAINST.

THEY, who follow the example of Diotrophes rather than that of St. Paul, add to the preceding another objection, to discredit, if possible, the imitators of this great

Apostle. *Do you pretend, say they, to be the successors of St. Paul and the other Apostles, whom you presumptuously cite as your models?*

To such objectors the following reflections will serve as a sufficient reply.

1. We have heard St. Paul, in the character of a believer, proposing himself as an example to all believers, and, as a minister of the Gospel, exhorting every pastor to tread in his steps.

2. John the Baptist preached repentance: The Apostles proclaimed remission of sins in the name of Jesus Christ, *who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification*: and every true minister still continues to insist upon these important doctrines. Now, as he, who takes the place of a person deceased, is accounted the successor of such person; so these faithful pastors should be regarded as teachers appointed to succeed both the forerunner, and the Apostles of Christ. It must be allowed, that the Apostles, as *elders* in the family of our Lord, were in possession of privileges, which we are not permitted to enjoy. But if the Gospel is unchangeable, and if the Kingdom of God still remains under its ancient form of government, the priesthood must, for the most part, of necessity, continue the same.

3. There was a time, in which the Jewish priests had lost the *Urim and Thummim*, with which Aaron and his sons were at first invested. There was a time, in which God no longer manifested himself to his own appointed priests, as he had been accustomed to do. But as, notwithstanding the loss of that glory, which formerly rested upon the Jewish church, every pious priest, such as Zacharias, was a true successor of Aaron; so, during the eclipse of that glory which once illuminated the christian church, every pious minister may justly be accounted a true successor of St. Paul.

4. The word *Apostle* signifies *one who is sent*, and answers to the term *Angel or messenger*. Our brethren, says St. Paul, who accompany Titus, *are the messengers, or Apostles, of the churches*. Every minister, therefore, who carries with sincerity the messages of his Lord, may, with propriety, be ranked among his Angels or messengers. Nor do such immediately lose their title, when they neglect to perform the

duties of their office. They may, like Judas, go under the name of Apostles even to their death, though utterly unworthy of such an honourable appellation. Thus, after the pastors of Ephesus and Laodicea had out-lived the transient fervors of their charity and zeal, they were still addressed, as the *Angels* of their several churches. And thus St. Paul gave the title of *Apostles* to the worldly ministers of his time : in quality of ministers, they were *Apostles* ; but in quality of worldly ministers, they were *false Apostles*.

5. As the name of *Cesar* is ordinarily applied to the twelve first Roman Emperors, so the name of *Apostle* is ordinarily applied to the twelve first ministers of the Gospel, who had been permitted to converse with their Lord, even after his resurrection, and to St. Paul, who was favoured with a glorious manifestation of his exalted Saviour. In this confined sense, it is acknowledged, that the name of *Apostle* belongs, in an especial manner, to those, who were sent forth by Christ, after having received their consecration and commission immediately from himself. But as the name of *Cesar* in a more general sense, may be given to all the Emperors of Rome, so the name of *Apostle* may be applied to every minister of the everlasting Gospel. Thus Barnabas, Andronicus, and Junia, who were neither of the number of the twelve, nor yet of the seventy disciples, were denominated *Apostles* as well as St. Paul.

6. It is the invariable opinion of slothful christians, that the zeal of ministers and the piety of believers, in the present day, must necessarily fall far below what they were in the Apostle's time : as though the promises of Christ were unhappily limited to the primitive church. This error has been frequently refuted, in vain, by a variety of christian writers, since nothing can be more conformable to that spirit of incredulity, which reigns among us, than to renounce at once, the most important promises of the new Testament. Had the same promises been made respecting temporal honours and profits, we should see a different mode of conduct adopted : *for the children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light.*

Monf. Roques bears the following testimony to the truth contended for in this place. "The ministers of the Gospel esteem themselves, and with reason, *the successors of the Apostles*. Their employment is essentially the same ;

“ though the Apostles were honoured with many glorious prerogatives, as being the first to lay the foundation of the church.”

“ The minister of Christ,” says the same writer, cannot be said vainly to flatter himself, when he counts upon the gracious assistance of his Master. He takes the promise of that Master for the solid foundation of his hope. *I am with you always*, said Christ to his apostles, and, in their persons, to all those, who should succeed them in the ministry, *even unto the end of the world.*”

“ It was this divine promise,” continues he ; “ a promise more steadfast than earth or heaven, that filled the Apostles with such an ardent zeal, as enabled them to rejoice evermore ; placing them above the fury of tyrants, and beyond the reach of fear ; assisting them to endure excessive fatigue, and toilsome journeys, the inclemency of the seasons, and the resistance of obdurate hearts.” Impressed with a just sense of this important promise, the venerable writer concludes with this fervent prayer. “ Holy Jesus ! who hast promised to continue for ever with thine Apostles, and to give them that wisdom, which no man shall ever be able to resist, give me to experience a participation of these signal favours, that, animated by the *same spirit*, with which thy first disciples were inspired, I may lead some soul a happy captive to the obedience of thee.” These beautiful quotations will make their own apology for appearing in this place.

7. If any are disposed to condemn Mons. Roques, as an enthusiast in this point, they consider not, how many great and honourable names they disgrace by such a precipitate judgment ; since all those pious fathers, who are looked upon as the reformers of corrupted doctrines and degenerate manners, were unanimously of the same opinion.

From the preceding reflections, it seems but reasonable to conclude, that all the true ministers of Christ among those nations, which were formerly known by the name of Gentiles are to be considered as the true successors of the Apostles, and particularly of St. Paul, who by way of eminence is entitled the Apostle of the Gentiles, and who, on that account, may with the greater propriety, be proposed to them as a model.

CHAP. V.

A THIRD OBJECTION REPLIED TO.

THEY, who will allow neither believers nor pastors to become imitators of St. Paul, very rarely forget to propose a third objection against such imitation. *If you pretend, say they, to be the Apostles' successors, then prove your mission by the performance of miracles equal to theirs.*

To this objection we reply——

1. That no mention is made of the miracles of Andronicus, Junia, and Barnabas, who were real Apostles: nor are any miracles attributed to Titus or Timothy, though they were the undoubted *successors of the Apostles*. Further; it is expressly said, that *John the Baptist*, though he was greater than the Prophets, *did no miracle*. On the other hand, some miraculous gifts were common in the church of Corinth, even among those, who were neither Apostles nor Evangelists: and these gifts were so far from being essential to apostolic zeal, that many unworthy brethren and many *false Apostles*, as well as the traitor Judas, were endued with them. This we are taught, in the most express terms, by our Lord himself.

2. If any of those pastors, who make a profession of following St. Paul, are observed to publish another Gospel, or to depart from the order established by the Apostles, the world has then reason to require miracles at their hand, as a demonstration, that their doctrines are divine, and that their recent customs are preferable to those, which were formerly adopted in the church of Christ. But, if they simply proclaim that glorious Gospel, which has been already confirmed by a thousand miracles, and are observed to adopt no other method than that of the Apostles; it is absurd, in the highest degree, to insist upon miracles as the only sufficient evidences of their mission. From worldly pastors, such attestations of their sacred commission might, with propriety, be required. These are the persons, who turn aside from the beaten track of Christ and his disciples, both with respect to doctrine and discipline: and these should be required, by the church, to give incontestible proofs, that their novel cus-

toms are better than those of St. Paul and the ancient Evangelists.

3. No sufficient reason can be given, why the humble imitators of St. Paul should be required to evidence their spiritual mission by extraordinary actions. On the one hand, they do but simply declare those religious truths, of which they have had the most convincing experience : and, on the other, they earnestly solicit the wicked to become partakers of the same invaluable blessing. Now the certainty of such declaration, and the sincerity of such invitation, may be solidly established upon two kinds of proof : first, upon *those proofs* which support the Gospel in general : and secondly, upon the *holy conduct* of those, who bear this testimony and repeat these invitations, by which they demonstrate the efficacy of their doctrine, and indisputably prove, that true christians are *dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God*. That pastor, who is unable to produce the *former* proofs, cannot possibly be regarded as a *true successor* of the great Apostle : and he, whose uniform conduct is sufficient to supply the *latter*, is no other than a false *Apostle*.

4. External miracles, which effect no change in the heart, nor rescue the soul from a state of spiritual blindness and death ; miracles, which serve only to repair the organs of a body, that must shortly be consigned to the grave ; miracles, which tend merely to modify matter, such as causing green trees to wither, withered trees to spring, and water to gush out of the flinty rock : miracles of this nature, are far less important than those, which cause the thorns of vice to wither, the seeds of grace to spring, and streams of sacred consolation to flow through those very hearts which were formerly barren as a desert, and hard as the rock, that Moses smote.

5. " If you wish for miracles," says a christian writer ; " if you are anxious to experience them in yourselves ; if, in the secret of your heart, you would become witnesses of his almighty power, by whom that heart was formed, then ask of him this sublime virtue [this charity] from which all your inclinations and habits detain you at so vast a distance, that you are in no situation to form any just idea of it, nor even to conceive the possibility of its existence."

6. This *sublime virtue*, this *divine charity* and these *sacred consolations*, which were as a *well of water springing up into*

everlasting life, in the hearts of Christ's first disciples, may still be made to break forth in ours. The source of these inestimable graces can never be exhausted; and the faithful, who experience in themselves this consoling miracle, stand in need of no other prodigy to establish them in the faith of the Gospel.

7. The most important miracles were those, which were wrought by the Apostles, when, as fellow-workers together with God, they opened the eyes of sinners, turning them *from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God*. True miracles of mercy these, and memorable conversions which the word of God, in the mouths of his ministers, is continually operating in every age.

8. The *charity*, which is discovered by a faithful pastor, who humbly co-operates with God in the conversion of his inveterate enemies, should be regarded by the world, as the truest test of his *Apostleship*. *Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; Whether there be tongues, they shall cease; but CHARITY never faileth. And though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and perform the most unheard-of prodigies, if I have not CHARITY, I am nothing.*

The preceding replies are abundantly sufficient to demonstrate the weakness of their *third objection*, who are the professed enemies of apostolic zeal.

CHAP. VI.

A FOURTH OBJECTION REFUTED.

THE objection here proposed has been abundantly more prejudicial to the cause of piety, than any of the preceding. 'You suppose,' say formal professors, 'that every pastor is called to labour for the salvation of souls, in the present day, with all that zeal, which animated St. Paul in primitive times. But their circumstances differ in a very material way. The Apostles were commissioned to preach the Gospel, either to obstinate Jews, or idolatrous Heathens; whereas our pastors are called to exercise their ministry among such, as have received the truth from their earliest infancy. Is it not then contrary to common sense, that the same laborious

efforts should be thought necessary for the instruction of CHRISTIANS which St. Paul was formerly constrained to make use of for the conversion of idolaters ?

As this spacious objection has been more frequently repeated, than properly refuted, it becomes necessary, in this place, to expose all its weakness, and to demonstrate, that the difference between sinners, who are baptized, and those, with whom St. Paul, had to do, is by no means in favour of indolent pastors.

1. There are found swarms of infidels and idolaters in every christian country upon earth. We need not look beyond protestant churches to discover multitudes of impious christians, who not only despise the Gospel in secret, but who even dare to make it the subject of public ridicule : men, who *have set up their idols in their hearts*, and who perfectly answer the apostles' description of degenerate professors.

2. St. Paul himself sufficiently answers this very objection, as follows : *In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature ; and as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them.* If there are any, who make a profession of receiving the christian faith, and who follow not this evangelical rule, the Apostle thus addresses them, with an holy warmth : ' Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith ; prove your ownelves ; know ye not your ownelves how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates ? Be not deceived : neither covetous persons, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God.'

3. Observe how the same objection is combated again in another of St. Paul's epistles. ' Behold, thou art called a CHRISTIAN, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, being instructed out of the' twofold law of Moses and of Christ. ' Thou, that makest thy boast of this law ; if thou through breaking the law, dishonourest God, the name of God is then blasphemed among the gentiles through you. Therefore, thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art, that judgest' the heathen, as sinners more hopeless than thyself : ' for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself ; for thou that judgest doest the same things. And thinkest thou, O man,' that thy privileges unimproved, will assist thee to ' escape the judgment of God ? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness ; not knowing, that the good-

ness of God leadeth thee to repentance?' Beware lest, 'after the hardness of thine impenitent heart, thou treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath.'

4. If every scriptural threatening is denounced against those, who are without that *holiness*, which the Gospel requires, it would ill become us to flatter either ourselves or others with being the true followers of Christ, merely on account of that external profession of christianity, which is generally apparent among us. Is it not undeniably evident, that such a profession, unless it be accompanied with strict holiness, will subject us to more and heavier stripes, than if we had never known the will of our heavenly Father, nor ever acknowledged Christ as our rightful Lord? Did not our gracious Master himself once openly manifest a greater degree of abhorrence toward the *lukewarm Christian*, than toward the *notorious sinner*? And has he not plainly declared, that myriads of righteous heathens shall be permitted to sit down in the Kingdom of God, while multitudes of his professing people shall be cast into outer darkness?

5. After infants have been baptized, and after young persons have been admitted to the holy communion, the true pastor, instead of taking it for granted, that they are become unfeigned christians by partaking of these ordinances, examines them with diligence from time to time, and forms an attentive observation of their conduct, from a judgment of their faith. If, after the strictest scrutiny, he discovers some among them, who hold the form, without experiencing the power of godliness, he renews his work with encreasing ardour. The most painful part of his duty is still before him, when he attempts to convert those *sinners*, who are *baptized*, and those *infidels*, who are *communicants*; since before he can lead them to that *which worketh by love*, as St. Paul was accustomed to lead unprejudiced heathens, he must first unmask them with a holy severity, as the blessed Jesus was accustomed to unmask the pharisees of his day.

6. If unregenerate christians are heathens by their worldly disposition; if they are pharisees by their presumption, and confirmed in their pharisaism by the fallacious opinions they indulge of their prerogatives under the Gospel:—it follows, that every modern pastor is called to a performance of the twofold duty above described. And if this be the case, how unreasonable is it to imagine, that the ministers of our own

time have a much less difficult task before them than those, who were formerly commissioned to publish the Gospel!

7. All pastors have an important task assigned them, and, till this is performed, they are required to labour without fainting. Observe in what this task consists:—‘He that descended from Heaven,’ saith St. Paul, ‘gave some Apostles; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come,’ both pastors and flocks, ‘unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.’ When every christian has attained to this exalted state, the ministers of the Gospel may then assert their work to be complete, and need imitate no longer the diligence of St. Paul. But while we are surrounded with baptized swearers, sabbath-breakers, slanderers, gamesters, drunkards, gluttons, debauchees, blasphemers, and hypocrites, who are using every effort to render christianity despicable before infidels; and execrable in the eyes of philosophers: at such a time it cannot be reasonably imagined that any individual labourer is permitted to stand idle in the spiritual vineyard. And yet, in this very time of universal degeneracy, there are not wanting many among us, who inconsiderately cry out; “St. Paul, without doubt, had reason to labour with unremitting assiduity for the conversion of idolatrous heathens; but *we* are converted already, and see no necessity for that burning zeal, and those strenuous efforts among our modern teachers, which were formerly commendable in that Apostle.”

8. If it be objected, that christians are here represented in a more deplorable point of view than candour or observation can warrant; we make our appeal to those proclamations, which have been made with a view to suppress the single sin of profaning the name of God, by impious oaths and horrible imprecations. These must undoubtedly be considered as public testimonies of public guilt. In such proclamations every christian government, whether catholic or protestant, equally complain, that all the civil laws, by which they have endeavoured to enforce the Law of God, have proved insufficient to prevent the overflowings of a crime, as *inspired* as it is *disgraceful*. In vain have new penalties and punishments been decreed; in vain are they constantly held forth from the pulpits of preachers and the thrones of Kings: this des-

picable vice still reigns undisturbed among us, insulting over the broken laws of earth and Heaven. Now if it has hitherto been found impossible to prevent the commission of a sin, which has neither pleasure nor profit to plead in its favour, what can we expect of all those thousand vices, which allure with promises of both? are not dissimulation and perjury, injustice and covetousness, lasciviousness and luxury apparent among the members of every church? Do not rapine, revenge, and murder, defile every part of Christendom, in spite of prisons, banishment and death? It is a truth too notorious to be controverted, that every crime, with which human nature has ever been polluted, is still continually practised in the most enlightened parts of the world.

We might here mention, if it were necessary, the contempt in which marriage is held, the instability of that holy estate, and the facility with which so sacred a bond is broken. We might go on to bewail the frequent commission of suicide in christian communities—But to speak of these with many other sins, which are encreasing around us to an alarming degree, would be only to echo back those sad complaints, which are every day breathed from the lips of the righteous. The above remarks may possibly appear uncharitable to some: but, if they are without foundation, how many *unmeaning expressions* do we find in our liturgy! what *hypocrisy* in our public confessions! what *false humility* in our prayers!

From all these observations, it is evident, that the most heathenish manners are common among christians so called, and that the most scandalous vices are prevalent, even in those countries, where reformed christianity has erected its standard. Let the impartial enquirer then declare, whether it be not peculiarly necessary to preach repentance among those, whose rebellion against God is accompanied with perfidiousness and hypocrisy?

CHAP. VII.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

1. **W**ERE it even certain, that professing christians in general walk according to their holy vocation, would it be commendable in pastors to shew less concern for the salvation of Christ's apparent disciples, than was anciently discovered by St. Paul, for the conversion of persecuting heathens? Christians are our brethren. The church, our common mother, has nourished us with the same spiritual milk, and calls us to a participation of the same heavenly inheritance. Christians are no more *strangers*; and even those, who are *bad* citizens, and *unfaithful* domestics, are nevertheless in some sense citizens of the same city with ourselves, and *of the household of God*. Hence, as we compose but one household, so whenever we are disposed to neglect any part of this family, we may apply to ourselves the following words of the Apostle: *If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel*. Let ministers, then, be placed in the happiest imaginable circumstances, and it will still become them to cry out, with the pious benevolence of St. Paul; *As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, ESPECIALLY unto them, who are of the household of faith*.

2. We may here pursue the idea, which Christ himself has given us, by comparing his church to a vineyard. If it be necessary to graft those stocks, which are naturally wild; is it less necessary to cultivate those, which have been already grafted? We see the husbandman bestowing most culture upon those vines, which produce the most excellent fruit. Let ministers attend to this general rule: and since *they* only can be fruitful in the sacred vineyard, who receive the word of God in faith, let them study to train up believers to the highest state of maturity. Thus the heavenly husbandman is represented, as purging every fruitful branch, *that it may bring forth more fruit*.

3. The word of God must be offered to sinners as a *remedy* suited to the disease of their souls: but to the faithful it must be administered as *nourishing food*. Hence, as the order of

grace resembles that of nature, it is necessary, in a spiritual sense, to minister nutriment to the healthy in much greater quantities, than medicine to those, who are diseased. Thus believers, who constantly hunger and thirst after greater degrees of grace, should more frequently receive the *living word*, that they *may abound yet more and more in knowledge*, till they are *filled with the fruits of righteousness*.

4. We find the following expressions in the epistle of St. Paul to the Romans : ‘ I am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able to admonish one another. Nevertheless I have written the more boldly unto you, as putting you in mind. And I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established.’ Now, if St. Paul could express so earnest a desire to instruct those christians, who were perfect strangers to him, and who were already so divinely enlightened ; far from being imitators of this great Apostle, do we not forfeit all pretensions to charity, while we suffer those ignorant christians to perish *for lack of knowledge*, who are not only of our neighbourhood, but probably of our very parish ?

5. Though St. Paul was assisted with miraculous endowments, yet how anxiously did he endeavour to fill up the twofold duties of a believer in Christ, and a minister of his Gospel. And shall *we* refuse to labour with equal earnestness, whose gifts are so mean, and whose graces are so inconsiderable ? Appointed, like the primitive preachers of christianity, to be *fishers of men*, is it not perfectly reasonable, that we should manifest as great activity with our feeble lines, as St. Paul was accustomed to discover in the use of his capacious net ? If that Apostle, filled with holy zeal, was enabled to convert more sinners at a single discourse, than many pastors are known to convert in a thousand sermons, should we not, by our uncommon assiduity, supply, as much as possible, the want of that incomprehensible energy, which accompanied his ministerial labours ?

6. Ministers are compared to labourers, who go forth to cultivate the lands of their master. Now St. Paul, as the foremost of these labourers, wrought night and day with an extraordinary instrument, which marked out furrows of an uncommon depth, and ploughed up entire provinces on a sudden. He made the fullest proof of his ministry, and, by

the most astonishing efforts, spread the seed of the Gospel *from Jerusalem, round about into Illyricum*. How vast a difference between the former and latter pastors of the christian church! Many of us are content to stand altogether idle, till *the night cometh, in which no man can work*: while others, who are disposed to some little occupation, employ themselves as workmen, who have *need* to be utterly *ashamed* of their insignificant labours. At best we hold but a tardy instrument; an instrument, which with immense toil will but barely graze the earth, we are called to cultivate. And shall we, thus unhappily circumstanced, permit our ploughshares to gather rust during six successive days, and then leisurely employ them but an hour upon the seventh; Surely such a mode of conduct is as contrary to common sense, as to the example St. Paul has left us.

7. So astonishing is the inconstancy, the weakness, and the depravity of the human heart, that in spite of all the persevering industry of this Apostle in the vineyard of his Lord, is still brought forth briars and thorns, to the anguish of his soul. *Behold*, saith he to the Corinthians, ‘the third time I am ready to come unto you, for your edifying. For I fear, lest when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, back-bitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults: and lest when I come, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many, which have sinned already, and have not repented.’

We shall close this chapter by proposing the following queries, which may be reasonably grounded upon the preceding passage. If the natural and supernatural talents of St. Paul; if his zeal, his diligence, and his apostolic authority were insufficient to engage his flock to conduct themselves as followers of Christ; if their want of piety drew from him tears of lamentation, and obliged him to renew his painful efforts with redoubled solicitude; can those pastors be said to possess the spirit of the Gospel, who behold with indifference the disorders of that falling church, which Christ has purchased with his own blood? And if the extraordinary labours of St. Paul were not sufficient fully to answer the design of the sacred ministry, is it not presumption indeed to imagine, that our trivial services are sufficiently complete?

CHAP. VIII.

A FURTHER REPLY TO THE SAME OBJECTION.

WHEN we attack a prejudice, that is obstinately defended, it is frequently as needful to multiply arguments, as it is necessary in a siege to multiply assaults. Pursuing this method, we shall endeavour, upon new grounds, to establish the doctrine contended for in the two last chapters.

1. After exhorting Timothy to labour without ceasing, St. Paul assigns the following reason for such injunction: *Know, saith he, that in the last times of the christian church, men, who make a profession of faith, 'shall be lovers of their own selves, despisers of those, that are good—lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God: having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.'* Now, if Timothy was exhorted to use all diligence, in opposing those evils, which were then only making their approach; is it reasonable that *we* should be remiss, who are unhappy enough to see those *last times*, in which the decay of piety, predicted by the Apostle, is become universal? On the contrary, is not this the moment, in which we should strenuously resist the overflowings of ungodliness, and fortify those who are not yet swept away by the impetuous torrent?

2. When the great Apostle benevolently carried the word of GOD to sinners of every different nation, he thereby armed against himself the authority of magistrates and priests, as well Jewish as pagan. His universal philanthropy, exposed him to the most cruel persecutions. Thousands, and ten thousands were set in array against him, and the inhabitants of every kingdom seemed determined to resist or destroy him, in his spiritual progress. He saw these surrounding dangers; but he saw them without discovering any symptom of fear: and rather than discontinue his painful labours, he cheerfully proceeded to encounter every threatening evil. We, on the contrary, are appointed to build up the children of the kingdom in *their most holy faith*. And shall we labour *less*, because we can labour with *less danger*? Shall we neglect the

duties of our sacred function, because our superiors in church and state permit us to convert sinners, command us to preach the Gospel, *erect us temples* for the public celebration of divine worship, and *allow us salaries*, that our ministry may never be interrupted by secular cares? The ministerial services, which St. Paul performed with such unabating zeal, when his reward was imprisonment and stripes, must we be engaged to discharge by emoluments and honours? And, after all, shall we limit our constrained obedience precisely to that point, which will merely, secure us from public deposition and disgrace?

3. What was the error of Demas; a man, as notorious by his fall among the *Evangelists*, as Judas among the *Apostles*? Demas loved this *present world*, and, ceasing to imitate the diligence of St. Paul, ungratefully left him to labour almost without a second. And will unfaithful Evangelists presume, that they may imitate, without fear, the apostacy of Demas, and renounce, with impunity, the example of St. Paul? If such is their unhappy persuasion, we submit the following queries to their serious consideration. Are the souls of men less valuable; is sin of any kind less detestable, or the Law of God less severe, in the present day, than in the earlier ages of the christian church? Have pastors a right to be remiss, while the night of incredulity is blackening around them? Are the attacks of antichristian philosophers less frequent and audacious at present, than in former times? Or, finally, is the appearance of our omnipotent Judge no longer expected in the world?

4. If the Apostles and primitive pastors have removed many threatening impediments out of our way; if they have procured for us our present advantages, by the most amazing exertions, and at the prodigious price of their blood; surely it can never be imagined, that they acted with so much resolution, and suffered with so much constancy, that we might become the *indolent readers* of their unparalleled history. Was it not rather, that, animated with a becoming sense of their great example, we might make the highest improvement of our inestimable privileges?

5. The mountains are now laid low, the valleys are filled up, the crooked ways are made straight, and we have only to carry that salvation to sinners, for which such wonderful preparations have been made. And are we negligent in

running on the errands of *everlasting LOVE*? And are we backward in bearing the happiest tidings to the most hapless of creatures? No excuse then can possibly be made for this coldness, except that, which the author of *Emilius* has put into the mouth of a fictitious character: *Of what importance is it to me*, says the vicar Savoyard, *what becomes of the wicked! I am but little concerned in their future destiny.* An excuse for the want of zeal, which can never be pleaded, without reflecting the utmost disgrace upon humanity.

6. Ye pastors of a flock ever prone to wander! choose whom you will follow, philosophers or Apostles; the indefatigable zeal of St. Paul, or the cruel indifference of the sceptical vicar? But, if you take the latter for your model, we solemnly entreat you to lay aside the *profession*, while you so shamefully renounce the *duties*, of the holy ministry. ‘As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.’ With you, however, it is a matter of very inconsiderable importance, whether the wicked be finally saved, or destroyed. And yet, careless as you are of its weal or woe, you presume to appear as ministers of the church, and as pastors over that *little flock*, for which the good shepherd was content to lay down his life. To rank with the watchful attendants of the fold is an honour, of which you are altogether unworthy; but you may with propriety be counted in the number of those ungrateful hirelings, who *care not for the sheep*.

8. It is true, you are not without companions, as well ancient as modern. You have Hophni and Phinehas, Gehazi and Balaam, to keep you in countenance? you have the prophets of Jezebel to plead in your favour, and every worldly ecclesiastic of the present day to approve your choice: but apostolical men will resolutely withstand you, like Elisha and his Master, in the cause of deserted truth.

Ye slothful domestics of the most diligent Master! Ye cruel attendants of the tenderest shepherd! say, have ye never heard that Master crying out, with the voice of affection, *Feed my sheep*? Have ye not seen him conducting his flock to an evangelical pastor, in the temple, in synagogues, in villages, in houses, in deserts, on the sea-shore, and on the tops of mountains? He anxiously sought out the miserable. Truth was the guide of his way, charity accompanied his steps, and his path was marked with blessings. His secret

efforts were more painful than his public labours : he publicly instructed through the day, but he privately agonized in prayer through the night. His first disciples were anxious to tread in the steps of their adorable Master. They exercised their ministry within sight of torments and death. And will you dare to neglect it, now the cry of persecution is hushed ? Will you equally despise, both the promises and threatenings of the Gospel ? Will you hasten the times of antichrist, by an antichristian conduct ? And when the Son of man shall come, shall he find you trampling under foot the Gospel of his grace ? Or, shall ye surprize you distributing cards round the tables of your friends, rather than earnestly inviting those friends to the table of your Lord ?

O that we could prevail upon you to stand in your proper post, and act in conformity to your professional character ! While you dream of security, you are surrounded with the most alarming dangers, ‘ Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth : having on the breast-plate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace : above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God : praying always with all prayer, and watching thereunto with all perseverance, and supplications for all saints ;’ and for the ministers of the Gospel in particular, ‘ that they may open their mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel, and diffuse abroad the unsearchable riches of Christ.’ Thus, quitting yourselves like men, in this sacred warfare, after steadily resisting, you shall finally overcome all the strength of the enemy, *by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left : Till having weathered out the evil day, continuing faithful unto death,* ye shall be rewarded with a *crown of everlasting life.*

CHAP. IX.

A FURTHER REFUTATION OF THE SAME OBJECTION.

1. **W**HEN we see a number of persons in perilous circumstances, charity constrains us to make our first efforts in favour of those, who appear to be in the most imminent danger. Such are unholy christians. Sinful heathens are doubtless in danger; obstinate Jews in still greater peril; but impenitent christians are in a situation abundantly more lamentable than either; since they offend against clearer light and knowledge, equally inattentive to the most gracious promises, on one hand, and the most terrible menaces on the other. To *sin* with the new Testament in our hand, and with the sound of the Gospel in our ears—to *sin* with the seal of baptism in our forehead, and the name of Christ in our lips—to *sin* and receive the holy communion; to ratify and break the most solemn engagements; what is this, but earnestly labouring out our own damnation, and plunging ourselves into those abysses of wretchedness, which Pagans and Jews are unable to fathom? How eagerly then should every believer attempt to rescue his falling brethren? and especially, how anxious should they be to arrest those leaders of the blind, who are drawing their followers to the brink of perdition? As this is one of those arguments, upon which the truth here pleaded for, must principally rest, we shall consider it in the several points of view, under which it is presented to us in the Gospel.

2. The commission of St. Paul was particularly directed to the Gentiles: yet, before he visited their benighted nations, he judged it his duty to make a full and free offer of the everlasting Gospel to the people of the Jews. For the conduct of the Apostle in this respect, the following reasons are to be assigned. First, *the promises pertained to the Jews in a peculiar manner.* Secondly, the children of Abraham, according to the flesh, had a more threatening prospect before them, in case of final impenitence, than any other people upon earth: *Tribulation and anguish shall be upon every soul of man, that doeth evil, of the Jew, FIRST and also of the Gentile.*

3. The same reasons, though chiefly the latter, are still to be urged, why the ministers of Christ should *principally* labour among christians. For if sinners of the *circumcision* shall be more severely punished than the ignorant heathen, so the Apostle declares, that sinners who are baptized into the name of Christ, shall be treated with still greater rigour than impenitent Jews. ‘He that despised Moses’ law, saith he, died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much forer punishment, then, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God—and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace?’ If this consideration was accompanied with its due effect, it would fire us with the most unconquerable zeal for the salvation of negligent christians.

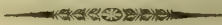
4. In one of the last discourses our Lord addressed to the cities of Galilee, we find him reading over them this dreadful sentence of condemnation. ‘Woe unto thee Chorazin, woe unto thee Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou Capernaum, which’ by thy religious privileges, ‘art exalted unto Heaven, shalt,’ for the non-improvement of them, ‘be brought down to Hell. Yea, it shall be more tolerable, in the day of judgment for the land of Sodom,’ which has been already consumed with fire from above, *than for thee*.

5. To draw the just consequences from this affecting menace, we must recollect, that, when it was pronounced, the inhabitants of the abovementioned cities had been favoured, but for a very short interval, with the ministry of Christ and his messengers: and if the death and resurrection of Jesus were afterwards published among them, it is more than probable, that these important facts were published only in a desultory and transient way. Nevertheless the sinners of Capernaum were thought worthy of greater punishment, than the sinners of Sodom. Hence we conclude, that, if the sinners of London, Paris, Rome, and Geneva, have hardened themselves against the truths of the Gospel for a much longer continuance, than the citizens of Capernaum were permitted to do, there is every reason to apprehend, that their sentence will not only be more dreadful than the sentence of

Sodom but abundantly less tolerable than that, which was pronounced upon the inhabitants of Galilee.

6. While we consider the various proportions in which future punishment shall be administered to the wicked of different classes, we may turn to those remarkable expressions of St. Peter and St. Paul :—‘ If after having escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome; the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For, it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.’ These declarations assist us to discover the true ground of that apostolic exhortation, with which we shall close this chapter : *Of some have compassion, making a difference : and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire.*

From this last view of the subject we may perceive, into how dangerous an error those persons are fallen, who presume to object against imitating the zeal of St. Paul.



CHAP. X.

A FIFTH OBJECTION ANSWERED.

THE solidity of the preceding remarks may be acknowledged by many pastors, who will still excuse themselves from copying the example of St. Paul.

‘ It is unreasonable’ they will say, ‘ to require that we should preach the word of God, in season, and out of season, as St. Paul once did, and as Timothy was afterwards exhorted to do. We find it, in this day, a matter of difficulty to prepare any public address, that may be either acceptable to the people, or honourable to ourselves.’

To this objection we return the following replies.

1. He, who spake as never man spake, rejected the ar of

our modern orators, delivering his discourses in a style of easy simplicity, and unaffected zeal.

2. We do not find, that St. Paul and the other Apostles, imposed upon themselves the troublesome servitude of penning down their discourses. And we are well assured, that when the seventy, and the twelve, were commissioned to publish the Gospel, no directions of this nature were given in either case.

3. St. Paul gives the following pastoral instructions to Timothy : ‘ give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift, that is in thee. Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them. Take heed unto thyself and to thy doctrine ; continue in them : for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee. Preach the word : be instant in season, out of season : reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine.’ Now, had it ever entered into the mind of the Apostle, that it would be proper for pastors to compose their sermons in the manner of rhetoricians, and to deliver them as public orators, he would most probably have given some intimation of this to his disciple. In such case, he would have held out to his pupil in divinity, some instructions of the following nature. “ O Timothy my son ! I have frequently commanded thee to labour in the work of the Lord, according to my example. But as thou art not an Apostle, properly so called, and hast not received the gift of languages, I advise thee to write over thy sermons as correctly as possible. And after this, do not fail to rehearse them before a mirror, till thou art able to repeat them with freedom and grace : so that when thou art called upon public duty, thou mayest effectually secure the approbation of thine auditors. Furthermore, when thou art about to visit any distant churches, lay up in thy portmanteau the choicest of thy sermons. And wherever thou art, take care to have, at least, one discourse about thee, that thou mayest be prepared against any sudden emergency, and never appear unfurnished in the eyes of the people.” The idea of such a passage in the epistles of St. Paul, whether public or private, is too absurd to be endured.

4. If advocates, after hastily considering a question of difficulty, are ready to plead the cause of their client before a court of judicature ; can it be possible, that, after several

years of meditation and study, a minister should still be unprepared to plead the cause of piety, before a plain assembly of his unlearned parishoners.

5. When we are deeply interested in a subject of the last importance, do we think it necessary to draw up our arguments in an orderly manner upon paper, before we attempt to deliver our sentiments upon the matter in hand? Are not the love and penetration of a parent, sufficient to dictate such advice as is suited to the different tempers and conditions of his children? After perceiving the house of our neighbour on fire, we do not withdraw to our closet to prepare a variety of affecting arguments, by way of engaging him to save both himself and his family from the flames. In such case, a lively conviction of our neighbour's danger, and an ardent desire to rescue him from it, afford us greater powers of natural eloquence, than any rules of art can furnish us with.

6. Horace observes, that neither matter nor method will be wanting upon a well-digested subject :

cui lecta potenter erit res,

Nec facundia deseret hunc, nec lucidus ordo.

With how much facility then may suitable expressions be expected to follow those animating sentiments, which are inspired by an ardent love to God and man; especially when subjects of such universal concern are agitated, as death and redemption, judgment and eternity? Upon such occasions, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak, *nor will the preacher be able to repeat a tenth part of the truths, which God has communicated to him, while meditating upon his text.* If malice can furnish those persons with an inexhaustible fund of conversation, who delight in malice, how much more may we suppose the charity of a pastor to furnish him with an inexhaustible fund of exhortation, instruction, and comfort.

7. It has been a plea with many ministers of the Gospel, that they neglect to proclaim that Gospel during six days in the week least they should be unprepared to address their parishoners, *with propriety*, upon the seventh. With teachers, who are thus scrupulously tenacious of their own reputation, we may justly be allowed to reason in the following manner. *To what purpose* are all those oratorical appendages, with which you are so studious to adorn your discourses: and

who hath required all this useless labour at your hand? If a servant, after being charged by his master with a message of the utmost importance, should betake himself to his chamber, and defer the execution of it day after day; would not such a delay be esteemed an unpardonable neglect? Or, if he should attempt to apologise for the omission, by alledging that he had been busily engaged in learning to repeat with *precision* the message he had received, and to move upon his errand with *dignity* and *grace*—would not such an excuse be regarded, as an instance of the highest presumption and folly? And can we imagine, that our heavenly Master will overlook that neglect in his public messengers, which would appear, in the conduct of a private domestic, so justly condemnable?

8. What advantage has accrued to the church, by renouncing the apostolic method of publishing the Gospel? We have indolence and artifice, in the place of sincerity and vigilance. Those public discourses, which were anciently the effects of conviction and zeal, are now become the weekly exercises of learning and art. *We believe and therefore speak*, is an expression, that has grown entirely obsolete among modern pastors. But nothing is more common among us, than to say—As we have sermons prepared upon a variety of subjects, we are ready to deliver them, as opportunity offers.

9. Many inconveniencies arise from that method of preaching, which is generally adopted in the present day. While the physician of souls is labouring to compose a learned dissertation upon some plain passage of scripture, he has but little leisure to visit those languishing patients, who need his immediate assistance. He thinks it sufficient to attend them upon every sabbath day in the place appointed for public duty; but he recollects not, that those, to whom his counsel is peculiarly necessary, are the very persons, who refuse to meet him there. His unprofitable employments at home, leave him no opportunity to go in pursuit of his wandering sheep. He meets them, it is true, at stated periods, in the common fold: but it is equally true, that during every successive interval, he discovers the coldest indifference with respect to their spiritual welfare. From this unbecoming conduct of many a minister, one would naturally imagine, that the flock were rather called to seek out their indolent pastor, than that he was purposely hired to pursue every straying sheep.

10. The most powerful nerve of the sacred ministry is ecclesiastical discipline. But this nerve is absolutely cut asunder by the method, of which we now speak. When a pastor withdraws fatigued from his study, imagining that he has honourably acquitted himself with regard to his people, he is too apt to neglect that vigilant inspection into families, upon which the discipline of the church depends. Such a spiritual instructor may justly be compared to a vain-glorious pedagogue, who, after drawing up a copy, and adorning it, for several days together, with all the embellishments of his art, should yet imagine, that he had admirably performed his part, in preparing it, at length, for his scholars, without any visible defects. And what could reasonably be expected from the pupils of such a teacher, but, that, fearing neither scholastic discipline, nor particular inspection, they should neglect to transcribe what their master with so much unprofitable toil had produced?

11. Since the orator's art has taken place of the energy of faith, what happy effect has it produced upon the minds of men? Have we discovered more frequent conversions among us? Are formal professors more generally seized with a religious fear? Are libertines more universally constrained to cry out, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* Do the wicked depart from the church, to bewail their transgressions in private; and believers to visit the mourners in their affliction? Is it not rather to be lamented, that we are at this day equally distant from christian charity, and primitive simplicity?

12. Reading over a variety of approved sermons is generally supposed to be preaching the Gospel. If this were really so, we need but look out some school-boy of a tolerable capacity, and after instructing him to read over, with proper emphasis and gesture, the sermons of Tillotson, Sherlock, or Saurin, we shall have made him an excellent minister of the word of God. But, if preaching the Gospel is to publish among sinners that repentance and salvation, which we have experienced in ourselves; if it is to imitate a penitent slave, who, freed from misery and iron, returns to the companions of his former slavery, declaring the generosity of their Prince, and persuading them to sue for mercy;—if this is to publish the Gospel of peace, then it is evident, that experience and sympathy are more necessary to the due performance of this

work, than all the accuracy and elocution that can possibly be acquired.

13. When this sacred experience, and this generous sympathy began to lose their prevalence in the church, their place was gradually supplied by the trifling substitutes of study and affectation. Carnal prudence has now for many ages, solicitously endeavoured to adapt itself to the taste of the wise and learned. But, while *the offence of the cross* is avoided, neither the wise, nor the ignorant are effectually converted. The Gospel is abundantly better suited to the *poor in spirit*, than to those, who value themselves as men of sagacity and science. *I thank thee, O Father!* said the lowly Jesus, *that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.* These *babes*, however, in the language of Christ, are the very persons, who have been usually neglected by us, for the mere gratification of reputed sages. Alas! how many thousand proofs do we require to convince us, that the wisdom of this world will continue to trample under foot the pearl of the Gospel, though in order to secure its reception, it should be presented among the artificial pearls of a vain philosophy?

14. In consequence of the same error, the ornaments of theatrical eloquence have been sought after with a shameful solicitude. And what has been the fruit of so much useless toil? *Preachers*, after all, have played their part with much less applause than *comedians*; and their curious auditors are still running from the pulpit to the stage, for the pleasure of hearing fables repeated with a degree of sensibility, which the messengers of truth can neither *feel*, nor *feign*.

Notwithstanding the above remarks have been expressed in the most pointed manner, we mean not to insinuate, that the errors already exposed are the only mistakes to be guarded against. Extremes of every kind are to be avoided with equal care. We condemn the carnal prudence of christian orators; but we as sincerely reprobate the conduct of those enthusiasts, who, under pretence, that Christ has promised to continue with his disciples to the end of the world, exhibit the reveries of a heated imagination for the truths of the Gospel. Too many of these deluded fanatics are found, who, taking their slothfulness and presumption, for the effects of a lively faith and an apostolic confidence, repeatedly affront the Almighty, and justly offend those candid hearers, who

are least disposed to take offence. *Offences* will undoubtedly *come*; but it behoves us to make a just distinction between the real *offence of the cross*, and that, which is given by an unlicensed presumption on our part.

If we are honoured with the pastoral office, let us consider the holy scriptures as an inexhaustible mine of sacred treasures. In the Law of the Lord let us meditate day and night. Before we attempt to deliver evangelical truths in public, let it be our first care, to penetrate our hearts, in private, with an adequate sense of those truths. Let us arrange them in the most suitable order: let us adduce and compare the several passages of sacred writ, which appear to support or explain the particular doctrines we mean to insist upon: but, above all, joining faith and prayer to calm meditation, after becoming masters of our subject, let us humbly ask of God, that *παραπνοία*, that lively and forcible elocution, which flows from the unction of grace.

And here, instead of resting contented with barely *requesting*, we should labour to acquire what we seek, by frequently stirring up the gift, that is in us. Let us embrace every opportunity of exhorting both believers and catechumens. Let us carry, with unwearied constancy, instruction to the ignorant, and consolation to the afflicted. Let us be faithful in reproving sinners of every class, and diligent in training up the children of our parish.

It is necessary indeed to be scrupulously cautious, lest we abuse the liberty of preaching from meditation, by becoming followers of those, who are more worthy of *censure*, than *imitation*. There are pastors of this kind, who, having acquired a good degree of spiritual knowledge, and a wonderful facility of expression, unhappily begin to pique themselves upon appearing before a numerous assembly without any previous study. Conscious of their own ability, these self-sufficient preachers make little or no preparation for one of the most solemn duties, that can possibly be discharged. They hasten to a crowded auditory without any apparent concern; and coming down from the pulpit with an air of the same easy confidence, with which they ascended it, contentedly return to that habitual listlessness, which had been interrupted by the external performance of a necessary work. Alas! if these presuming pastors could be prevailed upon to write over their sermons, to how much better purpose might

they thus employ their hours, than by heedlessly trifling them away, in frivolous conversation and shameful inactivity!

It is not to imitate examples of this nature, that we solicit the ministers of Christ to recover those hours, which are usually employed in composing their weekly discourses. How many are the important occupations, of which the faithful pastor has his daily choice! The wicked are to be reclaimed, and the righteous established. Hope must be administered to the fearful, and courage to the tempted. The weak are to be strengthened, and the strong to be exercised. The sick must be supported, and the dying prepared for dissolution. By frequent pastoral visits to hamlets, schools, and private houses, the indefatigable minister should continually be moving through the several parts of his parish; discovering the condition of those entrusted to his care, and regularly supplying the necessities of his flock; diffusing all around instruction and reproof, exhortation and comfort. To sum up his duties in a single sentence, he should cause the light, that is in him, to shine out in every possible direction, before the ignorant and the learned, the rich and the poor; making the salvation of mankind his principal pursuit, and the glory of God his ultimate aim.

Thus, after having faithfully performed the work of an evangelist, when he is about to be removed from his charge by death, or by any other providential appointment, he may take an affectionate leave of his people, and say; *Remember, my children, that, while I have sojourned among you, I have not ceased to warn every one of you night and day; and if my word has not always been accompanied with tears, yet it has constantly flowed from the truest sincerity and affection.*

CHAP. XI.

A REPLY TO THE FIFTH AND LAST OBJECTION, WHICH MAY BE URGED AGAINST THE PORTRAIT OF ST. PAUL.

THOSE persons who have already so earnestly resisted the truths for which we contend, will not fail to exclaim in the last place, by way of an unanswerable argument,

‘What you require of pastors is unreasonable, in the highest degree. If they are indeed called to labour for the salvation of souls, with the zeal and assiduity of St. Paul, the holy ministry must be regarded as the most painful of all professions, and, of consequence, our pulpits will be shortly unoccupied.’

Monf. Ostervald, who foresaw this objection, has completely answered it in his *Third source of the corruption, which reigns among christians*: “It will not fail to be objected,” says this venerable author, “that if none were to be admitted to holy orders, except those, who are possessed of every necessary qualification, there could not possibly be procured a sufficient number of pastors for the supply of our churches. To which I answer; that it would be abundantly better to expose ourselves to this inconvenience, than to violate the express laws of the written word. A small number of chosen pastors is preferable to a multitude of unqualified teachers.” [One Elijah was more powerful than all the prophets of Baal.] “At all hazards, we must adhere to the command of God, and leave the event to providence. But, in reality, this dearth of pastors is not so generally to be apprehended. To reject those candidates for holy orders, whose labours in the church would be altogether fruitless, is undoubtedly a work of piety; and such alone would be repulsed by the apprehension of a severe scrutiny and an exact discipline. Others, on the contrary, who are in a condition to fulfil the duties of the sacred office, would take encouragement from this exactness and severity; and the ministry would every day be rendered more respectable in the world.” Behold an answer truly worthy an apostolical man!

If it still be objected, by the generality of pastors, that what we require is as *unreasonable*, as it is *unusual*; Permit me to ask you, my lukewarm brethren, whether it be not necessary, that you should use the same diligence in your sacred profession, with which your neighbours are accustomed to labour, in their worldly vocations and pursuits?

The *fisherman* prepares a variety of lines, hooks, and baits; he knows the places, the seasons, and even the hours, that are most favourable to his employment; nor will he refuse to throw his line several hundred times in a day. If he is disappointed in one place, he cheerfully betakes himself to ano-

ther ; and if his ill success is of any long continuance, he will associate with those, who are greater masters of his art. Tell me then, ye pastors, who make the business of a fisherman the amusement of many an idle hour, do you really imagine, that less ardour and perseverance are necessary to prepare souls for Heaven, than to catch trout for your table.

The *hunter* rejoices in expectation of the promised chase. He denies himself some hours of usual repose, that he may hasten abroad in pursuit of his game. He seeks it with unwearied attention, and follows it from field to field with increasing ardour. He labours up the mountain : he rushes down the precipice : he penetrates the thickest woods, and overleaps the most threatening obstacles. He practises the wildest gestures, and makes use of the most extravagant language : endeavouring by every possible means, to animate both dogs and men in the furious pursuit. He counts the fatigues of the chase among the number of its pleasures : and through the whole *insignificant* business of the day, he acts with as much resolution and fervour, as though he had undertaken one of the noblest enterprizes in the world.

The *fowler* with equal eagerness pursues his different game. From stubble to stubble, and from cover to cover he urges his way. He pushes through the stubborn break, and takes his way along the pathless dingle : he traverses the gloomy mountain, or wanders devious o'er the barren heath : and, after carrying arms all day, if a few trifling birds reward his toil, he returns rejoicing home.

Come, ye fishers of men ! who, notwithstanding your consecration to God, are frequently seen to partake of these contemptible diversions ? come, and answer by your conduct, to the following questions. Is the flock committed to your charge, less estimable than the fowl, which you so laboriously pursue ? Or are you less interested in the salvation of your people, than in the destruction of those unhappy quadrupeds, which give you so much silly fatigue, and afford you so much brutal pleasure ?

Permit me, still further, to carry on my argument. Was the panting animal, which usually accompanies your steps in the last-mentioned exercise, incautiously to plunge into a dangerous pit ; though faint with the labours of the day, and now on your return, would you carelessly leave him to perish ? Would you not, rather, use every effort to extricate him from

apparent death ; Could you even sleep or eat, till you had afforded him every possible assistance ? And yet, you eat, you sleep, you visit ; nay, it may be, you dance, you hunt, you shoot ; and that without the least inquietude, while your flocks are rushing on from sin to sin, and falling from precipice to precipice. Ah ! if a thousand souls are but comparable to the vilest animal, and if these are heedlessly straying through the ways of perdition, may we not reasonably exhort you to use every effort in preserving them from the most alarming danger, and in securing them from the horrors of everlasting death ?

But, passing by those amusements, which so generally engage your attention, let me reason with you from one of the most laborious occupations of life. You are called to be *good soldiers of Jesus Christ*. And can you possibly imagine, that less resolution and patience are required in a spiritual warrior, than in an earthly soldier ? Behold the mercenary, who, for little more than food and clothing, is preparing to go on his twentieth campaign ! Whether he is called to freeze beneath the pole, or to melt under the line, he undertakes the appointed expedition with an air of intrepidity and zeal. Loaded with the weapons of his warfare, he is harrassed out with painful marches : and after enduring the excessive fatigues of the day, he makes his bed upon the rugged earth, or perhaps, passes the comfortless night under arms. In the day of battle, he advances against the enemy amid a shower of bullets, and is anxious, in the most tremendous scenes, to give proofs of an unconquerable resolution. If, through the dangers of the day, he escapes unhurt, it is but to run the hazard of another encounter : perhaps, to force an entrenchment, or to press through a breach. Nothing, however, discourages him ; but, covered with wounds, he goes on unrepining to meet the mortal blow. All this he suffers, and all this he performs in the service of his superiors, and with little hope of advancement on his own part.

Behold this dying veteran, ye timorous soldiers of an omnipotent prince ! and blush at your want of spiritual intrepidity. Are you not engaged in the cause of humanity, and in the service of God ? Are you not commissioned to rescue captive souls from all the powers of darkness ? Do you not fight beneath *his* scrutinizing eye, who is KING of KINGS, and LORD of LORDS ? Are you not contending within sight

of eternal rewards, and with the hope of an unfading inheritance? And will you complain of difficulties, or tremble at danger? Will you not only avoid the heat of the engagement, but even dare to withdraw from the standard of your sovereign Lord? Let me lead you again into the field; let me drag you back to the charge: or, rather, let me shame your cowardice, by pointing you to those resolute commanders, who have formerly signalized themselves under the banners of your Prince. Emulate their example and you shall share their rewards.

But if, hitherto, you have neither contemplated the beauty, nor experienced the energy of those truths, by which St. Paul was animated to such acts of heroism; it is vain, that we exhort you to *shine* among the foremost ranks of christians, as *inextinguishable lights*, *holding up*, against every enemy, as *a two-edged sword*, *the word of everlasting life*. Instead of this, it will be necessary to place before you the excellence, and efficacy of this Apostle's doctrines, together with the infinite advantages, which they procure to those, who cordially embrace them. And this we shall endeavour to do in the second part of this work. Mean-while, we will conclude this first part, with a short exhortation from Chrysostom's fifty-ninth sermon upon St. Matthew. "Since the present
" life is a continual warfare; since we are at all times surrounded by an host of enemies, let us vigorously oppose
" them, as our royal chieftain is pleased to command. Let
" us fear neither labour, nor wounds, nor death, Let us all
" conspire mutually to assist and defend one another. And
" let our magnanimity be such, as may add firmness to the
" most resolute, and give courage to the most cowardly."

THE
PORTRAIT OF ST. PAUL, &c.

PART II.

The Doctrines of an evangelical Pastor.

THE minister of the present age, being destitute of christian piety, is neither able to preach, nor clearly to comprehend, the truths of the Gospel. In general, he contents himself with superficially declaring certain attributes of the Supreme Being ; while he is fearful of speaking too largely of grace or its operations, lest he should be suspected of enthusiasm. He declaims against some enormous vice, or displays the beauty of some social virtue. He affects to establish the doctrines of heathen philosophers : and it were to be wished, that he always carried his morality to as high a pitch, as some of the most celebrated of those sages. If he ever proclaims the Lord Jesus Christ, it is but in a cursory way, and chiefly when he is obliged to it, by the return of particular days. He himself continues the same through all seasons ; and the cross of Christ would be entirely laid aside, unless the temporal prince, more orthodox than the minister, had appointed the passion of our Lord to be the preacher's theme, during certain solemnities of the church.

With the evangelical pastor it is wholly otherwise : ' Jesus Christ,' he is able to say with St. Paul, ' sent me to preach the Gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is, to them that perish, foolishness ; but unto us, which are saved, it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the vain wisdom of the wise, and will bring to no-

thing the false understanding of the prudent. Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that the world by this wisdom,' this boasted philosophy, knew not God, but rested in materialism and idolatry, 'it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.' The preaching of the true minister, which commonly passes for *folly* in a degenerate world, is that through which God employs his power, for the conversion of sinners and the edification of believers. It comprehends all that is revealed in the old and new Testament: but the subjects on which it is chiefly employed, are the precepts of the decalogue, and the truths of the Apostles' creed. They may be reduced to four points: 1. True repentance toward God. 2. A lively faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. 3. The sweet hope, which the Holy Spirit sheds abroad in the hearts of believers. 4. That christian charity, which is the abundant source of all good works. In a word, the good pastor preaches, *repentance, faith, hope, and charity*. These four virtues include all others. These are the four pillars which support the glorious temple, of which St. Paul and St. Peter make the following mention: *Ye are God's building. Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house.*

By searching into the solidity of these four supports, we may observe how vast a difference there is between the materials of which they are composed, and that *untempered mortar*, with which the ministers of the present day are striving to erect a showy building upon a sandy foundation.

The evangelical pastor preaches TRUE REPENTANCE toward God.

THE true minister, convinced, both by revelation and experience, that Jesus Christ alone is able to recover diseased souls, employs every effort to bring sinners into the presence of this heavenly physician, that they may obtain of him spiritual health and salvation. He is fully convinced, that he, who is not *weary and heavy laden*, will never apply for relief; that he, who is not *poor in spirit*, will constantly despise the riches of the Gospel; and that they, who are unacquainted with their danger, will turn a deaf ear to the *loudest* warnings of a compassionate Saviour. His first care, then, is to press upon his hearers the necessity of an unfeigned re-

pentance ; that, by breaking the reed of their vain confidence, he may constrain them, with the *poor*, the *miserable*, the *blind*, and the *naked*, to fall before the throne of divine justice : whence, after seeing themselves condemned by the law of God, without any ability to deliver their own souls, he is conscious they will have recourse to the throne of grace, entreating, like the penitent publican, to be *justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*. It is in this state of humiliation and compunction of heart, that sinners are enabled to experience the happy effects of that evangelical repentance, which is well defined in the xivth chap. of the Helvetic Confession : “ By repentance,” say our pious reformers, “ we mean that sorrow, or that displeasure “ of soul, which is excited in a sinner, by the word and spirit “ of God, &c. By this new sensibility, he is first made to “ discover his natural corruption, and his actual transgressions. “ His heart is pierced with sincere distress ; he deplores them “ before God ; he confesses them with confusion, but with- “ out reserve ; he abhors them with an holy indignation ; he “ seriously resolves, from the present moment, to reform his “ conduct, and religiously apply himself to the practice of “ every virtue, during the remainder of his life. Such is true “ repentance : it consists, at once, in resolutely renouncing “ the devil, with every thing that is sinful ; and in sincerely “ cleaving to God, with every thing that is truly good. “ But we expressly say, this repentance is the mere gift of “ God, and can never be effected by our own power.”

It appears, by this definition, that our reformers distinguished *that* by the name of repentance, which many theologists have called the *awaking* of a soul from the sleep of carnal security ; and which others have frequently termed *conversion*. But, if sinners understand and obtain the disposition here described, no true minister will be over-anxious, that they should express it in any particular form of words.

How sin and the necessity of repentance entered into the world.

OBSERVE the account, which the evangelical minister gives, after Moses and St. Paul, of the manner in which that dreadful infection made its way into the world, that corrupt nature, that *old man*, that *body of death*, which Christ the seed of the woman came to destroy. *When the tempted woman*

saw, that the fruit of the tree, which God had forbidden her to touch, was pleasant to the eyes, good for food, and to be desired to make one wise, she took thereof and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. Thus entered into the very fountain-head of our nature that moral evil, that complicated malady, *that lust of the flesh, that lust of the eyes, and that pride of life*, which the second Adam came to crucify in the flesh, and which is still daily crucified in the members of his mystical body.

If Jesus Christ never publicly discoursed concerning the entry of sin into the world, it was because his sermons were addressed to a people, who had been long before instructed in a matter of so great importance. On this account, he simply proposed himself to Israel, as that promised Messiah, that Son of God and Son of man, who as about to repair the error of the first Adam, by becoming the resurrection and the life of all those, who should believe in his name.

St. Paul was very differently circumstanced, when labouring among those nations which were unacquainted with the fall, except by uncertain and corrupt tradition. Behold the wisdom, with which he unfolds to the Heathen, that fundamental doctrine, which was not contested among the Jews: *The first man Adam, the head of the human species, was made a living soul; but Jesus Christ, the last Adam, was made a quickening spirit; and he also is the head of the human species, for the head of every man is Christ. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from Heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy [worldly:] and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly [regenerate.] And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we, whose souls are already regenerate, shall also bear the complete image of the heavenly; when this mortal shall have put on immortality; For the flesh and blood, which we have from the first Adam, cannot inherit the kingdom of God.*

As human pride is continually exalting itself against this humiliating doctrine, so the true minister as constantly repeats it, crying out in the language of this great Apostle: ‘All unregenerate men are under sin: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God: they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable: the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes: we know that whatsoever

things the law saith,' the natural or the mosaic law, 'it saith to them that are under the law : that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God. There is no difference ; for as all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,' so all equally need the merits and assistance of ' Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood.' All those, therefore, who, neglecting Christ, rely upon *the works of the law*, are under the curse ; and all their endeavours to deliver themselves, by their imperfect obedience, are totally vain : *For it is written, cursed is every one, that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them.* Thus, by denouncing maledictions, as dreadful as the thunders from mount Sinai, against every act of disobedience, *the law becomes our school-master to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

This doctrine is maintained by all the Christian Churches.

WHEN an evangelical minister insists upon the fall, the corruption, and the danger of unregenerate man, he acts in conformity to the acknowledged opinions of the purest Churches. As I chiefly write for the French protestants, I shall here cite the confession of faith now in use among the French Churches. " We believe," say they in the ix, x and xi articles of their creed, " that man, having been created after the image of God, fell, by his own fault, from the grace he had received ; and thus became alienated from God, who is the fountain of holiness and felicity ; so that having his mind blinded, his heart depraved, and his whole nature corrupted, he lost all his innocence.—We believe that the whole race of Adam is infected with this contagion, that in his person we forfeited every blessing, and sunk into a state of universal want and malediction.—We believe also that sin, &c. is a perverseness producing the fruits of malice and rebellion."

The reformed Churches of Switzerland make as humiliating a confession. " Man," say they, " by an abuse of his liberty, suffering himself to be seduced by the serpent, forsook his primitive integrity. Thus he rendered himself subject to sin, death, and every kind of misery : and such as the first man became by the fall, such are all his descen-

“dants.” When we say, man is subject to sin, we “mean
 “by *sin*, that corruption of nature, which from the fall of
 “the first man, has been transmitted from father to son :
 “vicious passions, an aversion to that which is good, an in-
 “clination to that which is evil, a disposition to malice, a
 “bold defiance and contempt of God. Behold the unhappy
 “effects of that corruption, by which we are so wholly de-
 “bilitated, that of ourselves we are not able to do, nor even
 “to choose, that which is good.” Helvetic Confession.
 Chap. viii.

Every man may find in himself sufficient proofs of these painful truths. “God is the creator of man,” say the Fathers who composed the synod of Berne, “and he intended that man should be entirely devoted to his God. “But this is no longer his nature ; since he looks to creatures, “to his own pleasure, and makes an idol of himself.” Acts of Synod. Chap. viii.

This doctrine is also set forth in the Aufsbourg confession ; as well as in the ix and x articles of the Church of England, where it is expressed in the following terms : “Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam, but it is the “fault and corruption of the nature of every man, whereby he “is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his “own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always “contrary to the spirit ; and therefore, in every person born “into this world, it deserveth God’s wrath and damnation.” —“The condition of man, after the fall of Adam, is such, “that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon “God : wherefore we have no power to do good works, “pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God “by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, “and working with us when we have that good will.”

Nothing less than a lively conviction of the corruption, weakness, and misery, described in these confessions of faith, can properly dispose a man for evangelical repentance.

Without evangelical repentance, a lively faith in Christ, or regeneration by the Holy Spirit, will appear not only unnecessary, but absurd.

AS the knowledge of our depravity, is the source from

whence evangelical repentance and christian humility flow, so it is the only necessary preparation for that living faith, by which we are both justified and sanctified. He who obstinately closes his eyes upon his own wretchedness, shuts himself up in circumstances which will not suffer him to receive any advantage from that glorious Redeemer whom *God hath anointed to preach the Gospel to the POOR* ; to heal the BROKEN-HEARTED ; to *preach deliverance to the CAPTIVES, and recovering of sight to the BLIND* ; to *set at liberty THEM THAT ARE BRUISED* ; to *preach the acceptable year of the Lord*. Reason itself declares, that if sinful man is possessed of sufficient ability to secure his own salvation, he needs no other Saviour, and *Christ is dead in vain*. In short, so far as we are unacquainted with our degenerate estate, so far the important doctrine of regeneration must necessarily appear superfluous and absurd.

Here we may perceive one grand reason, why the ministers of the present day, who are but superficially acquainted with the depravity of the human heart, discourse upon this mysterious subject in a slight and unsatisfactory manner.

The true minister, on the contrary, following the example of his great Master, speaks upon this momentous change with affection and power. Observe the terms, in which our Lord himself declares this neglected doctrine : *Verily, verily I say unto you, except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*. As though he should say ; the natural man, how beautiful an appearance soever he may make, is possessed of an heart so desperately wicked, that unless it be broken by the repentance which John the Baptist preached, and regenerated by the faith which I declare, he can never become a citizen of Heaven : for the doors of my Kingdom must remain everlastingly barred against those *ravening wolves*, who disguise themselves as sheep, and those painted hypocrites, who salute me as their LORD, without embracing my doctrines and observing my commands. *Verily, therefore, I say unto you, my first disciples and friends, except ye be converted and become as little children*, who are strangers to ambitious, envious, and impure thoughts, *Ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*.

Such is the doctrine that is still able to convert every inquiring Nicodemus. At first it may perplex and confound them : but at length, submitting to the wisdom of their hea-

venly teacher, they will cry, Impart to us, Lord, this regenerating faith : and when once they have obtained their request, they will adopt the prayer of the disciples, and proceed like them, from faith to faith, till all things in their regenerate hearts are become new.

But, if this doctrine is a savour of life unto some, it is also a savour of death unto others. It gives offence to blinded bigots, while modern infidels strengthen themselves against it, as Pharaoh once strengthened himself against the authority of Jehovah. *Thus saith the Lord*, said Moses to that obstinate Monarch, *Let my people go that they may serve me :* and the haughty infidel replied, *who is the Lord that I should obey his voice ? I know not the Lord, neither will I, let Israel go.* Come up out of mystic Egypt, saith the Son of God to every sinful soul : *Follow me, in the regeneration,* and I will teach you to *worship God in spirit and in truth.* And who is the Son of God ? replies some petty Pharaoh : I know neither him nor his father, nor conceive myself in any wise obliged to obey his commands.

Impious as this language may appear, that conduct of every irreligious christian must be considered as equivalent to it, according to those words of our Lord : He that despiseth my servants, and my doctrines, *despiseth me ; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.* Whatever mask such a pharisaical professor may wear, he *loves the world ;* therefore *the love of the Father is not in him ;* he hates both Christ and his Father, his repentance is superficial, his faith is vain, and sooner or later, his actions or his words will testify, that he, is an utter enemy to Christ and his members.



HOW THE FAITHFUL PASTOR LEADS SINNERS TO REPENTANCE.

WHAT was spoken by God to Jeremiah, may in some sort be applied to the true minister : *I have set thee to root out and to plant, to pull down and to build.* For before the sacred vine can be planted, the thorns of sin must be rooted up, together with the thistles of counterfeited righteousness : and before the strong tower of salvation can be erected, that

spiritual Babel must be overthrown, by which presumptuous men are still exalting themselves against Heaven.

To lead sinners into a state of evangelical repentance, the true minister discovers to their view the corruption of the heart, with all the melancholy effects it produces in the character and conversation of unregenerate men. After he has denounced the anathemas of the law against particular vices, such as swearing, lying, evil-speaking, extortion, drunkenness, &c. he points out the magnitude of two general or primitive sins. The greatest offence according to the law, he declares to be that, by which its first and great command is violated: consequently, those, who love not God beyond all created beings, he charges with living in the habit of damnable sin; since they transgress that most sacred of all laws, which binds us to love the Deity with all our heart. Hence, he goes on to convict those of violating a command like unto the first, who love not their neighbour as themselves: and to these two sins, as to their deadly sources, he traces all the crimes, which are forbidden in the law and in the Prophets.

And now he proceeds to lay open, before the eyes of professing christians, the two greatest sins which are committed under the Gospel dispensation. If the two great commands of God under the new covenant, are to this effect; that we believe on his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another; it is evident, that the two greatest sins under the Gospel, are, the want of that living faith, which unites us to Christ, and that ardent charity, which binds us to mankind in general, as well as to believers in particular, with the bands of cordial affection. As darkness proceeds from the absence of the sun and moon; so from these two sins of omission, flow all the various offences, which are prohibited by the evangelical law. And if those, who are immersed in these primitive sins, are withheld from the actual commission of enormous offences, they are not on this account to be esteemed radically holy; since they are possessed of that very nature from which every crime is produced. Sooner or later, temptation and opportunity may cause some baneful shoots to spring forth in their outward conduct, in testimony that a root of bitterness lies deep within, and that the least impious of men carry about them a degenerate nature, a body of sin and death.

To give more weight to these observations, he sets forth the greatness of the supreme Being, enlarges on his justice,

and displays the severity of his laws. He tramples under foot the pharisaical holiness of sinners, that ye may bring into estimation the real virtues of the *new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*. To awaken those who are sleeping in a state of carnal security, he denounces the most alarming maledictions, calling forth against them the thunders of mount Sinai, till they are constrained to turn their faces Zion-ward; till they seek for safety in the Mediator of the new covenant, and hasten to the *sprinkling of that blood, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel*.

By this method, he conducts his wandering flock to the very point where ancient Israel stood, when God had prepared them to receive the law by his servant Moses. Now after the people had heard the *thunderings, and the noise of the trumpet*; after they had seen the *lightnings, and the mountain smoking*: when, unable any longer to gaze on the dreadful scene, *they said unto Moses, speak thou with us and we will hear; but let not God speak unto us, without a Mediator, lest we die*.—Then it was that Moses began to console them in the following words: *Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that you sin not*. So in the present day, they only, who are brought to this poverty of spirit, are properly disposed to receive the riches of divine mercy. As soon, therefore as the evangelical minister has sufficiently alarmed a sinner, with the terrors discovered upon mount Sinai, he anxiously prepares him for the consolations of the Gospel, by a sight of the suffering scene upon Calvary.

Many pious divines have supposed, that, by preaching the cross of Christ alone, mankind might be brought to true repentance. What the fathers of the Synod of Berne have said upon this point, deserves the attention of those, who desire successfully to use that spiritual weapon, which is *sharper than any two-edged sword*.

“The knowledge of sin,” say they, “must of necessity be drawn from Jesus Christ. The Apostle writes thus, *God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*. It follows, that sin must have made us abominable and extremely hateful, since the Son of God could no other way deliver us from the burden of it, than by dying in our stead. Hence, we may conceive,

“ what a depth of misery and corruption there is in the heart, “ since it was not able to be purified, but by the sacrifice of “ so precious a victim, and by the sprinkling of the blood of “ God,” i. e. of a man miraculously formed, in whom dwelt *all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*. “ The Apostles have “ clearly manifested the sinfulness of our nature by the death “ of Christ; whereas the Jews, after all their painful researches, “ were not convinced of sin by the law of Moses. After a “ solid knowledge of sin has been drawn from the passion of “ our Lord, there will naturally flow from this knowledge a “ true repentance ; that is, a lively sorrow for sin, mingled “ with the hope of future pardon. To this necessary work, “ the Holy Spirit also powerfully contributes, bringing more “ and more to the light, by its mysterious operations, the “ hidden evils and unsuspected corruptions of the heart ; “ daily purifying it from the filthiness of sin, as silver is pu- “ rified by the fire.” *Acts of Synod, chap. viii. ix, xiv.*

HOW THE PROPHETS, JESUS CHRIST, HIS FORERUNNER, AND HIS APOSTLES, PRE- PARED SINNERS FOR REPENTANCE.

EVER faithful to the word of God, the minister of the Gospel endeavours to humble the impenitent, by appealing to the sacred writers, and particularly to the declarations of Jesus Christ.

The corruption of the heart is the most ancient and dreadful malady of the human race. Man had no sooner made trial of sin, but he was driven by it from an earthly paradise : and so terrible were its first effects, that the second man was seen to assassinate the third. This moral contagion encreased through every age to so astonishing a degree, that, before the deluge, God ‘ saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. After the flood, God still declared the imagination of man’s heart to be evil from his youth. The heart of man,’ saith he again long after that time, ‘ is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked : who can know it ? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins.’

Our Lord himself, who perfectly *knew what was in man*, being the physician who alone is able to heal us, and the Judge who will render to every one according to his works; our Lord has described mankind alienated from the chief good, filled with aversion to his people, and enemies to God himself. *I send you forth*, saith he to his disciples, *as lambs among wolves. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me, before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love his own; but because I have chosen you out of the world, that ye should walk in my steps, therefore the world hateth you. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. All these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because, notwithstanding their deism and polytheism, They know not him that sent me: For he that hateth me, hateth my Father also. These things have I told you, that when they shall chase you from their churches, as demons would chase an Angel of light, ye may remember that I told you of them.*

The Jews were doubtless, in one sense, the most enlightened of all people; seeing they offered to the true God, a public worship unmixed with idolatry, were in possession of the Law of Moses, the Psalms of David, together with the writings of the other Prophets, in which the duties required of man, both with respect to God and his neighbour, are traced out in the most accurate manner. Nevertheless, Jesus Christ represents this enlightened people as universally corrupted in spite of all these advantages: *Did not Moses*, saith he to them, *give you the Law? and yet NONE of you keepeth the Law.*

What appears most extraordinary in the sermons of our Lord, is the zeal with which he bore his testimony against the virtues of those Jews, who were reputed men of uncommon devotion. Although they piqued themselves upon being *eminently* righteous, he declared to his disciples, that, unless their *righteousness* should *exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees*, they should *in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*. And observe the manner, in which he generally addressed those religious impostors: ‘Woe unto you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess’ [full of covetous desires and disorderly passions;] ‘Thou blind pharisee, cleanse first that which is within—that the outside may be clean also.’

Nothing is more common than that blindness, which suffers a man to esteem himself better than he really is, and this blindness is, in every period and in every place, the distinguishing characteristic of a pharisee. This species of hypocrisy, with which St. Paul was once elated, agrees perfectly well with the ordinary sincerity of sinners, who blindly regard amusements the most trifling and expensive, as allowable and innocent pleasures; who look upon theatres, as schools of virtue; intrigue and deceit, as prudence and fashion; pomp and profusion, as generosity and decorum; avarice, as frugality; pride, as delicacy of sentiment; adultery, as gallantry, and murder as an affair of honour.

To all such modern christians, may we not, with propriety, repeat, what our Lord once openly addressed to their predecessors? Without doubt, we are authorized, to cry out against them, with an holy zeal, ‘Woe unto you hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones and of all uncleanness. Ye outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity:’ of *hypocrisy*, because, your virtues have more appearance than solidity; and of *injustice*, because you render not that which is due to God, to Cæsar, or to your fellow-creatures, whether it be adoration, fear, honour, support, or good-will.

But, if the depravity of the Jews in general, and of the pharisees in particular, appear abundantly evident; must we suppose there were no happy exceptions among them? It is true, the royal Prophet declares—‘The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any, that did understand and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no not one.’ But were not the disciples of our Lord to be considered in a different point of view? No: even after the extraordinary assistance afforded them by the Son of God, the Apostles themselves did but confirm the sad assertion of the psalmist. Our Lord, upon whom no appearances could impose, once testified to James and John, that, notwithstanding their zeal for his person, they were unacquainted with his real character; and that, instead of being influenced by his spirit, they were actuated by that of the destroyer. *Ye then, being evil;* said he to all his disciples: *Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? One*

of you shall betray me—Peter who is the most resolute to confess me, shall deny me thrice—and all ye shall be offended because of me. Lastly: our Lord constantly represented the unregenerate, as persons ‘diseased and condemned. They that are whole, said he, have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Ye are of this world, therefore I said unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am He,’ and refuse to observe the spiritual regimen I prescribe, *ye shall die in your sins. Except ye repent, ye shall perish.*

It is notorious, that John the Baptist prepared the way of his adorable Master by preaching the same doctrine: *O generation of vipers, said he to the pharisees and sadducees, to the profane and professing part of the nation, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.*

It is equally well known, that the disciples were instructed by Christ himself to tread in the steps of his forerunner: *It behoveth, said he, Christ to suffer; and that REPENTANCE should be preached in his name among all nations.* Hence an Apostle was heard to cry out; *God now commanded all men every where to repent.* And at other times, the same divine teacher was inspired to write as follows: ‘We, who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the gentiles, were by nature the children of wrath even as others: for we were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.’

The same doctrine was constantly held forth by the other Apostles, as well as by St. Paul. *In time past, saith St. Peter, we have wrought the will of the gentiles, walking in lasciviousness, lusts, revellings, &c. The whole world lieth in wickedness; saith the beloved John: and St. James solemnly testifies, that every friend of the world is the enemy of God.*

This humiliating doctrine, which the world universally abhors, is a light too valuable to be hidden under a bushel: and till it is raised, as it were, upon a candlestick of gold, we can never hope to see the visible church enlightened and reformed.

Observations upon the repentance of worldly men.

IF it be enquired, do not all ministers preach repentance? we answer; that ordinarily, true ministers alone preach true repentance. The preachers of the day, as they are conformable to the world in other things, so they are perfectly contented with practising the repentance of worldly men. Now as he, who receives only base coin, cannot possibly circulate good money, so he, who, satisfies his own heart with a short-lived sorrow for sin, cannot possibly give free course to that evangelical repentance, which the Gospel requires. And it is observable, that the hearers of such ill-instructed scribes, generally fix those bounds to their repentance, which are satisfactory to their impenitent pastors.

The repentance, we here condemn, may be known by the following marks.

1. It is *superficial*, and founded only upon the most vague ideas of our corruption: hence, it cannot, like that of David and Jeremiah, trace sin to its source, and bewail the depravity of the whole heart.

2. It is *pharisaical*, regarding only outward sins. The righteousness of the pharisees rested upon the most trifling observances, while they neglected those weighty commands of the Law, which respect the love of God and our neighbour. They afflicted themselves, when they had not scrupulously paid the tenths of their herbs; but they smote not upon their breasts, when they had rejected the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ. In the same dangerous circumstances are those penitents of the present day, who are less sorrowful on account of having offended God and rejected Christ, than that they are become objects of ridicule, contempt or punishment, by the commission of some impious or dishonourable action. We frequently hear these false penitents bewailing the condition, to which they have reduced themselves, and giving vent to the most passionate expressions of sorrow. But, when are they seen to afflict themselves, because they have not been wholly devoted to God? Or when do they shed a single tear at the recollection, that they have not cherished their neighbour as themselves? Are they ever heard to lament the want of that *faith* in Christ, *which worketh by love*? Are they ever engaged in seeking after that communion

of saints, by which believers become of one heart and one soul? Alas! so far are they from this, that they continue equally tranquil under the maledictions of the Gospel, as under those of the Law. They hear, without terror, those dreadful words of the Apostle, *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha*: and though they neither love nor know him, yet they vainly look upon themselves, as godly mourners and unfeigned penitents.

3. This repentance is *unfruitful*, inasmuch as those, who repent after this manner, are utter strangers to compunction of heart. None of these are constrained to cry out, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* They come not to the Redeemer among such as are weary and heavy laden. They have no experience of that godly sorrow, by which the true penitent dies to sin: and so far are they from being born again of the Spirit, that they neither expect, nor desire any such regeneration. In short, this repentance, is rarely as sincere as that of Judas, who confessed his sin, justified the innocent, subdued his ruling passion, and returned the money he had so dearly gained.

Evangelical repentance is an incomprehensible work to the generality of ministers. Wherever it appears, they are prepared to censure it; and are earnest in exhorting men to fly from it, rather than request it as a gift from God. Thus, when they behold any one truly mourning under a sense of sin, smiting upon his breast, with the publican, stripping off, with St. Paul, the covering of his own righteousness, and enquiring, with the convicted jailor, *what must I do to be saved?* they suppose these to be certain signs of a deep melancholy: they imagine the conversation of some enthusiast has driven the man to despair, and will not scruple to affirm, that he has lost the proper use of his reason. So true it is, that *the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God*, nor is even able to form any just ideas of that repentance, which is the first duty imposed upon us by the Gospel, and the first step toward that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

The moralists of the present time, acknowledge that all men are sinners; but they neglect to draw the just consequences from so bad a truth. To be found a *sinner* before an infinitely holy and just God, is to forfeit, at once, both our felicity and existence. To appear as an offender in the

eyes of our all-seeing Judge, is to lie in the condition of a broken vessel, which the potter throws aside as refuse : it is to stand in the circumstances of a criminal, convicted of violating the most sacred laws of his Prince. The two most important laws of God are those, which require *piety* toward himself, and *charity* toward our neighbour. Now if we have violated both the one and the other of these laws ; and that, times without number ; it becomes us not only to confess our transgression, but to consider our danger. When a traitor is convicted of treason, or an assassin of murder, he immediately expects to hear his sentence pronounced : and thus, when a sinner confesses himself to be such, he makes a tacit acknowledgment, that sentence of death might justly be pronounced upon him.

Some persons are naturally so short-sighted, that they can only discover the most striking objects about them. Many in the moral world are in similar circumstances, to whom nothing appears as sin, except impieties of the grossest kind. If we judge of God's commands according to the prejudices of these men, *idolatry* is nothing less than the act of prostrating ourselves before an idol : and *murder* is merely the act, by which a man destroys the life of his fellow-creature. But, if these deluded persons could contemplate sin in a scriptural light ; if they could avail themselves of the Law of God, as of an observatory erected for sacred meditation, their moral view would be sufficiently strengthened to discover the following truths.

1. If we have not, at all times, placed a greater confidence in the Creator, than in any of his creatures ; if we have either feared or loved any one more than our celestial parent, we have then really set up another God, in opposition to the Lord of heaven and earth.

2. If, neglecting to worship him in spirit and truth, we have suffered ourselves to be seduced by any splendid vanity of the age, we have sinned, in the same degree, as though we had fallen down before a molten image.

3. If, in our conversation, our reading, or our prayers, we have ever irreverently pronounced the *name of God*, we have then taken that *sacred name in vain* : and God himself declares, that he will not hold such a one guiltless.

4. If we have refused to labour diligently, through the week, in the work of our particular calling ; or if we have

ever made the sabbath a day of spiritual indolence and frivolous amusement ; then we have neglected and broken that Law, which we are peculiarly commanded to *remember and keep*.

5. If we have, at any time, been wanting in obedience, respect, or love, to our parents, our pastors, our magistrates, or to any of our superiors ; or if we have neglected any of those duties, which our relations in society, or our particular vocation has imposed upon us, we have merited that God should cut us off from the land of the living.

6. If we have weakened our constitution by excess of any kind ; if we have struck our neighbour in a moment of passion : if we have ever spoken an injurious word ; if we have ever cast a look directed by malice ; if we have ever formed in our hearts a single evil wish against any person whatever, or if we have ever ceased to love our brother ;—we have then, in the sight of God, committed a species of murder.

7. If we have ever looked upon a woman with any other feelings than those of chastity ; or if we have, at any time, cast a wishful glance upon the honours and pleasures of the world ; we have sufficiently proved the impurity of our nature, and must be considered, as living in *enmity with God*.

8. If we have received the profit annexed to any post or employment, without carefully discharging the duties incumbent upon us, in such situation ; or if we have taken advantage either of the ignorance, or the necessity of others, in order to enrich ourselves at their expence ; we may justly rank ourselves with those, who openly violate the eighth command.

9. If we have ever offended against truth in our ordinary conversation ; if we have neglected to fulfil our promises, or have ever broken our vows, whether made to God or man ; we have reason, in this respect, to plead guilty before the tribunal of immutable truth.

10. If we have ever been dissatisfied with our lot in life ; if we have ever indulged restless desires, or have given way to envious and irregular wishes ; we have then assuredly admitted into our hearts that covetousness, which is the root of every evil.

When St. Paul considered the Law, in this point of view, he cried out : *It is spiritual ; but I am carnal, sold under sin*. And when Isaiah, passing from the letter to the spirit, dis-

covered the vast extent of the decalogue, he exclaimed: *Woe is me! for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.* If our self-applauding moralists would be persuaded to weigh their piety in the same balance, they would find it as defective, at least, as that of Isaiah and St. Paul.

Here, perhaps, some objecting pharisee may say; if I have sinned in some degree, yet I have not committed *such* crimes as many others have done: and I trust, that God will not be severe in attending to *trifling sins*. But, 1. These pretended *trifling sins* are ordinarily of so great a number, that the *multitude* of them becomes equivalent to the *enormity* of those crimes, which are rarely committed: so mountains and seas are but collections of grains of sand and drops of water.

2. Every *voluntary* transgression argues a real contempt of the Legislator's authority; and in such contempt, there is found the seed of every sin that can possibly be committed, in opposition to his express command. All the commands of God, whether they be great or small, have no other sanction than that which consists in his divine authority, and this authority is trampled under foot, by every petty delinquent, as well as by every daring transgressor.

3. Those, which we usually esteem *trivial sins*, are the more dangerous on account of their being less attended to. They are committed without fear, without remorse, and generally without intermission. As there are more ships of war destroyed by worms, than by the shot of the enemy; so the multitude of those, who destroy themselves through *ordinary sins*, exceeds the number of those who perish by *enormous offences*.

4. We have a thousand proofs, that small sins will lead a man, by insensible degrees, to the commission of greater. Nothing is more common among us than the custom of swearing and giving way to wrath without reason; and these are usually regarded as offences of an inconsiderable nature. But there is every reason to believe, that they who have contracted these vicious habits, would be equally disposed to perjury and murder, were they assailed by any forcible temptation, and unrestrained with the dread of forfeiting their honour or their life. If we judge of a commodity by observing a small sample; so by little sins, as well as by

trivial acts of virtue, we may form a judgment of the heart. Hence the widow's two mites appeared a considerable oblation in the eyes of Christ, who judged by them, how rich an offering the same woman would have made, had she been possessed of the means. For the same reason, those frequent exclamations, in which the name of God is taken in vain, those poignant railleries, and those frivolous lies, which are produced in common conversation, discover the true disposition of those persons, who, without insult or temptation, can violate the sacred laws of piety and love. The same seeds produce fruit more or less perfect, according to the sterility or luxuriance of the soil in which they are sown. Thus the very same principle of malice which leads a child to torment an insect, acts more forcibly upon the heart of a slanderous woman, whose highest joy consists in mangling the reputation of a neighbour: nor is the cruel tyrant actuated by a different principle, who finds a barbarous pleasure in persecuting the righteous, and shedding the blood of the innocent.

If prejudice will not allow these observations to be just, reason declares the contrary. The very same action that, in certain cases, would be esteemed a *failing*, becomes, in some circumstances, an *offence*; and in others, an *enormous crime*. For instance—If I despise an *inferior*, I commit a fault; if the offended party is my *equal*, my fault rises in magnitude; if he is my *superior*, it is greater still: if he is a respectable magistrate—a beneficent prince—if that prince is my sovereign Lord, whose lenity I have experienced after repeated acts of rebellion; who has heaped upon me many kindnesses; who means to bestow upon me still greater favours: and if after all, I have been led to deny and oppose him, my crime is undoubtedly aggravated, by all these circumstances, to an extraordinary degree. But, if this offended benefactor is Lord of Lords and King of Kings—the Creator of man—the Monarch of Angels—the Ancient of days, before whom the majesty of all the monarchs upon earth disappears, as the lustre of a thousand stars is eclipsed by the presence of the sun—if this glorious Being has given his beloved Son to suffer infamy and death, in order to procure for me eternal life and celestial glory—my crime must then be aggravated in proportion to my own meanness, the greatness of benefits received, and the dignity of my exalted

Benefactor. But our imagination is bewildered, when we attempt to scan the enormity, which these accumulated circumstances add to those acts of rebellion, denominated sins.

They, who are not working out their *salvation with fear and trembling*, must necessarily live in the practice of some constitutional sin; and this self-indulgence, however secret it may be, will not suffer them to perceive the demerit of their daily transgressions. An old debauchee, whose chief delight has been in seducing women, or an infamous murderer, who has shed human blood like water, may as easily conceive the horror that adultery and murder excite in virtuous souls.

Before we can form a rational judgment of sin and the punishment it deserves, it becomes us to entertain just ideas of moral order; to mark the obligation laid upon the supreme legislator to maintain that order by wholesome laws, and to discover, in some degree, the sanctity, the excellence, and the extent of those absolute commands. It is necessary to understand the dependance of the creature upon the Creator; since the image formed by the presence of an object before a mirror, is not more dependant upon that object, than all orders of created beings depend upon the Creator. if he withdraws his protecting hand, they are no more; if he stretches out the arm of his vengeance, they are plunged, at once, into an abyss of misery. We must reflect upon all the various obligations, under which we lie to the Almighty, as Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, and Comforter. We must consider those examples of his vengeful justice, which he has placed before our eyes, on purpose to awaken our fears: together with the unmerited favours, by which he has constantly sought to engage our grateful affection. It becomes us likewise, to observe the vanity of all those appearances, by which we are allured into sin: and lastly, it is necessary to remember, that *God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing*. While we pay not a proper attention to every one of these circumstances, we must necessarily form an imperfect judgment concerning the nature of sin, the severity with which God has determined to punish it, and the greatness of that expiatory sacrifice, by virtue of which his justice and his mercy unite in pardoning the penitent.

When the law of God is wilfully transgressed, it is ridi-

culous in any man to attempt the justification of himself, by pleading that he has committed no enormous crimes ; or that, if ever he has been guilty of any such offences, his good actions have always been sufficient to counterbalance their demerit. Frivolous excuses ! Is not one treasonable act sufficient to mark the traitor ? Is not that soldier punished as a deserter, who flies his colours but a single time ? And does not a woman forfeit her honour by one moment of weakness ?

Though we grant, there are some sins of a peculiarly atrocious kind ; yet as murder will always appear, before an earthly tribunal, according to its horrible nature, so sin will ever be considered as such before an infinitely holy God. If a man accused of having wilfully poisoned a fellow-creature, should address his judge in terms like these ;—The charge brought against me is just : but let it be considered, that the person I have destroyed was only an *infant*—that he was the child of a *common beggar*—and that this is the only murder I have committed through the whole of my life. On the other hand, I have been a constant benefactor to the poor ; and surely a thousand acts of charity will abundantly outweigh one little dose of arsenic. No ; the Judge would answer ; when you prolonged the life of the indigent by your alms, you merely performed a duty, which is universally required of every worthy citizen ; and the law allows you nothing on this account. But if you have given the smallest dose of poison to any human creature, with an intent to destroy his life, the law pronounces you a murderer, and will punish you as such.

After our first parents had offended by eating the forbidden fruit, they had but vainly excused themselves in saying : ‘ We have gathered only that, which appeared to be of little worth—we have tasted it but once—moreover, our labour in the garden is of much greater value than the fruit we have taken. Lord ! condemn us not to death for so inconsiderable an offence.’ Such, however, are the frivolous excuses with which every blinded moralist contents his seared conscience, and with which he hopes to satisfy his omniscient judge. When St. Paul was one of this class, he practised upon himself the same delusions. Capable only of natural sentiments, the hidden truths of a spiritual law were not only incomprehensible, but vain and foolish things in his estima-

tion. This we learn from the following passage in his epistle to the Romans : *I was alive without the law once*, paying little attention to the spirituality of its precepts, or the severity of its threatenings, and indulging no suspicion either of my corruption, or my condemnation. *But when the commandment came*, in its spiritual energy, *sin revived*, assuming an appearance suited to its infernal nature, *and*, received a sentence of death in myself, *I died*. *I had not then known sin, but by the law : for I had not known lust*, which is the source of every evil, and first cause of our condemnation, *except the law had said, thou shalt not covet*.

Every sincere christian, in imitation of this Apostle, may with propriety say ; there are various sins, which I had never seen as *such*, but by the light of the Gospel : for example, I had lived in security with respect to abusing the faculty of speech, and had never known the Almighty's intention of judging me upon that article, if Christ himself had not openly declared ; *Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment : for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned*. If those, who trust in their own righteousness, would seriously examine themselves by the twofold law of Moses and of Christ, they would form a new judgment of their spiritual circumstances, and pass, with St. Paul, from the estate of the pharisee, into that of the publican.

Further—sins of omission, as well as those of commission, are sufficient to draw upon us the maledictions of the law, which equally commands us to do good and to abstain from evil. Offences of this nature are seldom regarded as sins by the generality of mankind : and hence, they are wholly unalarmed at the recollection of them. To lack diligence in our duties, moderation in our joys, attention in our prayers, and zeal in our devotions ; to live without gratitude toward our divine benefactor, without resignation under losses, patience in affliction, confidence in God during times of danger, and content in the state to which he has called us ; to want humility toward our superiors, courtesy toward our equals, assibility toward our inferiors, meekness toward those who displease us, faithfulness to our word, strict truth in our conversation, or charity in the judgment we form of others—All these are things that never disturb the repose of a worldly man ; nor does he esteem them as real offences in the

fight of God. He considers not, that an inattentive nurse may as effectually destroy a child, by withholding from it proper nourishment, as though she obliged it to sip a poisonous draught; that a soldier would be condemned to death, if the enemy should surprize a town while he was sleeping on his post, equally as though he had been busy in opening the gates for their admission; and that Christ represents the want of an holy fervour, as the grand reason why lukewarm christians excite in him the utmost detestation and abhorrence. An entire chapter in the Gospel is employed to teach us that sins of omission will constitute the principal cause of a sinner's condemnation at the last day. The slothful servant is cast into outer darkness, not for having robbed another of his talent, but for the non-improvement of his own: the foolish virgins are excluded from the marriage feast, not for having betrayed the bridegroom, but because they were unprepared to receive him; and every christian is acquainted with that terrible sentence, which shall one day be pronounced upon the wicked—*Depart from me ye cursed; for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: &c.* To have that religion, which is pure and undefiled before God, it is not only necessary that we keep ourselves unspotted from the world, but we must also visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction; relieving the unfortunate to the utmost of our ability, and exerting our power in spreading truth and happiness among all around us.

Thus hunted at length, from many a dangerous shelter, unhumiliated sinners will still presume to adopt the following plea—we pray, we fast, we give alms, we receive the holy sacrament: and what more do you require? Such was the foundation of the ancient pharisees' hope: but Christ and his Apostles overthrew their vain confidence, by the same arguments, which evangelical ministers are still obliged to turn against multitudes of religious professors, who indulge an exalted opinion of their own contemptible merits.

The Gospel requires, say these faithful pastors, that, to the external marks of religion, you should be careful to add humility and charity; and if these two capital graces are wanting, your religion is but a body without a soul. You have received the *holy sacraments* of our church: but what salutary effects have they produced in your life and conversation? The *circumcision*, which saved the Jews, was not the

circumcision of the flesh, but *that of the heart*: and the *baptism*, which saves christians, is not that by which the body is sprinkled with water, but that which purifies the soul. So the *passover*, which was acceptable to God on the part of the Jews, consisted not simply in eating the paschal lamb; but in penetrating their souls with gratitude, on recollecting the many wonderful deliverances, which the Almighty had wrought for his people. And the communion, which is acceptable on the part of christians, consists not merely in receiving the consecrated elements, as various classes of sinners are accustomed to do; but in uniting themselves to the Lord by a living faith, and to all his members by an ardent charity. You *pray*—And did not the pharisees so? yea, they were remarkable for their long and zealous prayers: but, alas! while they acknowledged God *with their lips*, *their hearts were far from him*. You *give alms*—but, if you mean with these to purchase Heaven, you do but deceive your own souls, while your pretended charity degenerates into insolence: or, if you merely seek to procure the reputation of being charitably disposed; you have your reward. You *fast*—but, if you do this chiefly through custom, or through respect to the orders of your Prince, your fast can no more be counted *religious*, than the regimen prescribed you by a physician: and if these facts have not produced in you a sincere repentance, and a true conversion, however you may regard them as acts of devotion, they are in reality no other than acts of hypocrisy. Moreover, the pharisees, fasted twice in the week; while you, it may be, are among the number of those, who imagine they have made a valuable sacrifice to God, by abstaining from a single repast in a year.

As pharisaical moralists *have sought out so many inventions*, to evade the necessity of an unfeigned repentance; and as philosophizing christians rise up with one consent against this doctrine of the Gospel; we shall conclude this subject, by disclosing the sources of their common error.

1. There are phantoms of virtue, or virtues purely *natural*, which pass in the world for divine. But, who ever imagined the dove to be *really virtuous*, because she is not seen, like the eagle, to make a stoop at birds of a weaker frame than herself? or who supposes wasps to be *generous* insects, because they are observed mutually to defend themselves, when their nest is attacked? Is not the conjugal and maternal tenderness

of the human species apparent, in an eminent degree, among various tribes of the feathered kind? And do we not see, among bees and ants, that ardent patriotism, which was so highly extolled among the Romans? Does not the spider exhibit as manifest proofs of ingenuity and vigilance, as the most industrious artist? And do not carnivorous animals discover all that fearless intrepidity, which is so universally boasted of by vain-glorious heroes? Let us not mistake in a matter of so much importance: as nothing but charity can give to our alms the value of good works, so nothing less than the fear of God, and a sincere intention of pleasing him, can give, to our most valuable propensities, the stamp of solid virtues. If we could completely expose the worthless alloy, which worldly men are accustomed to pass off as sterling virtue, many of those, who now esteem themselves rich in good works, would be constrained to *abhor themselves and repent in dust and ashes.*

2. Many persons indulge too favourable ideas of the human heart, through their ignorance of that unsullied purity, which God requires of his intelligent creatures. They judge of themselves and others, as a peasant judges of a theme replete with solecisms, who far from expressing the discernment of a critic, admires the vast erudition of the young composer. Thus, some external acts of devotion are applauded by undiscerning christians, as commendable works, which in the sight of God, and before holy spirits, appear altogether polluted and worthy of punishment.

3. If we are sometimes deceived by our own ignorance, we more frequently impose upon others, by our innate hypocrisy. Unregenerate men, after having thrown a cloak over their distinguishing vices, are anxious to make a parade of virtues, which they do not possess. The proud man is, sometimes, observed putting on the garb of humility, and with the most lowly obeisance, professing himself the very humble servant of an approaching stranger. Immodesty is frequently masked with an affected air of chastity and bashfulness; hatred, envy, and duplicity, veil themselves under the appearances of good-nature, friendship, and simplicity: and this universal hypocrisy contributes to render its practitioners less outwardly offensive, than they would otherwise be; as an unhandsome woman appears less defective, to a dis-

tant beholder, after having nicely varnished over the blemishes of her face.

4. It frequently happens, that one vice puts a period to the progress of another. Thus vanity, at times, obliges us to act contrary to the maxims of avarice, avarice contrary to those of indolence, and indolence contrary to those of ambition. A refined pride is generally sufficient to overcome contemptible vices, and may influence us to the performance of many exterior virtues. Hence, the impious and sordid pharisee went regularly to the temple: he prayed, he fasted, he gave alms; and, by all these appearances of piety and benevolence, acquired the commendation of the world. Society makes a kind of gain by these acts of dissimulation, which are as the homage paid to *virtue* by *vice*, and by *impiety* to *devotion*. But, notwithstanding every plausible appearance, that can possibly be put on, when the minister of the Gospel declares the fall of man, together with the absolute need of regeneration, he is supported at once, by revelation, reason, and experience.

5. If the moral disorder, with which human nature is infected, appears not always at its utmost height, it is because regeneration having commenced in many persons of every rank, the wicked are overawed by the influence of their example. Add to this, that God restrains them, as with a bridle, by his providence, and by those motions of conscience, which they vainly endeavour to stifle. It is notorious, that the fear of public contempt and punishment, is sometimes able to arrest the most abandoned in their vicious career; since they cannot discover what they really are, without arming against themselves the secular power. Thus the terror which prisons and gibbets inspire, constrains ravening wolves to appear in the garb of inoffensive sheep. But is it possible, that innocence so constrained, should be accounted of any value, even among Heathens themselves? It is impossible, since we find one of their own poets declaring—

Oderunt peccare mali, formidine pœnæ.

The wicked abstain from mischief, through fear of punishment. And all the recompense, he conceives due to such guiltless persons, consists in not becoming the food of ravens upon a gibbet:

non pascet in cruce corvos.

6. If servile fear is sometimes the cause of our innocence,

necessity is more commonly the cause of our apparent virtues. A youth of any modesty is generally cautious among his superiors, who afford him neither money to indulge, nor liberty to discover his inclinations. Now, if this forced discretion should, at length, become habitual to him, he may in such circumstances esteem himself a virtuous man, because he has not, like the son of a dissolute courtier, plunged himself into every kind of impiety: whereas had he enjoyed but equal liberty with the licentious rake, he might have surpassed him in every sinful excess. On the other hand, when an infamous voluptuary, enfeebled either by age or by his frequent debaucheries, finds it absolutely needful to live in more sober and orderly stile, immediately he takes himself for another Cato; not considering, that *necessity alone* is the source of his temperance. The least excess disorders his health, and the weakness of his stomach obliges him to abstain from those luxurious feasts, which he can still converse of with so much satisfaction. If such a one is virtuous, because no longer able to rush into his former excesses; then we may prove the most incorrigible robber to be an honest man, while the irons are on his hands, or when, scared by the officers of justice, he flies to some secret retreat. Has that woman any reason to boast of her virtuous conduct, who was never solicited by those men, who were most likely to have triumphed over her modesty? And yet, many such, filled with self-approbation, will frequently applaud their own innocence, placing that to the account of virtue, which was merely owing to providential circumstances; or, perhaps to the want of personal attraction. Such plausible appearances no more merit the commendation due to solid virtue, than the sickly wolf, who peaceably passes by a flock of sheep, can be said to deserve the caresses, which a shepherd bestows upon his faithful dog.

7. Effectually to impose upon others by a beautiful outside, we practice a deeper deceit upon our own hearts: and very frequently we succeed as well, in hiding from ourselves our own *evil dispositions*, as in concealing from others our *unworthy actions*. Could we discover all that secretly passes in the world, we should not want demonstrative proofs of the depravity of the human heart. But why need we go abroad in search of a truth, which is easily evidenced at home? Had we ourselves but dared to have executed openly, what we have acted in imagination, when our irascible or concupiscible

passions have been roused, where should we have hidden our guilty heads, or how should we have escaped the sword of justice? Convinced too late of our degenerate nature, we should, haply, have smitten upon our breasts, with the repentant publican, adopting long ago his humiliating confession, in the anguish of our souls. Every thinking person must allow, that had *evil intentions* fallen under the cognizance of human laws, and had the secular power possessed equal ability to punish them, as it punishes those actions, of which they are the very root and soul, the whole earth must, in such case, have become as vast a scaffold, as it is now a place of groves. Can it be necessary to multiply observations upon this head, when the Almighty, whose mercy and justice are infinite, sufficiently declares the universal depravity of mankind, by the variety of scourges, with which He is constrained to punish both individuals and commonwealths?

8. If the children of this world are unable to form any just conception of the human heart and its evil propensities, it is because they are in the number of those natural men, of whom the Apostle Paul makes mention. And such, having a natural antipathy to the Gospel, while they are ever ready to cast reproach upon the faithful, are equally prepared to favour those of a like disposition with themselves. Thus Herod, Caiaphas, and Pilate, mutually overlooked the faults of each other, while they united in accusing and persecuting Christ.

It is usual with those, who are destitute of true religion, to esteem some among their sinful companions, as moral and well-disposed men : but, were they themselves to be converted, their error in this respect, would soon become apparent. Upon daring to oppose any torrent of impiety, with the zeal of their heavenly Master, instead of finding among their associates any natural disposition to real virtue, they would meet with indisputable proofs, in spite of a thousand amiable qualities, that all unregenerate men resemble one another, in their *enmity against God*. Yes; whether they inhabit the banks of the Thames, or the Seine; the lake of Genesareth, or that of Geneva; they are in the sight of God, as filthy *swine* trampling under foot the pearls of the Gospel, or like *ravening wolves* outrageously tearing in pieces the Lamb of God.

It might, perhaps, have been objected, that this Portrait

is overcharged, had not Christ himself, who is *immutable Truth* and *unsearchable Love*, pencilled out the gloomiest traits observable in it. Following such a guide, though we may give much offence, yet we can *never err*.

THE SECOND POINT OF DOCTRINE, INSISTED UPON BY THE TRUE MINISTER, IS A LIVING FAITH.

TO shew the necessity of repentance, without publishing the remission of sins, through faith in Jesus Christ, would be to open a wound without binding it up. It would be leading sinners to the brink of a tremendous gulph, and cutting off all possibility of their retreat. But nothing can be more contrary to the intention of the faithful minister, than to sport with the miseries of man, or *ultimately* to aggravate his distress.

When he has discovered to his hearers that natural propensity to evil, which manifests its existence in every heart, by a variety of external transgressions: when he has convinced them, by the word of God, and by an appeal to *every man's conscience*, that they are unable to deliver themselves, either from that fatal propensity, or its dreadful consequences; after he has thus demonstrated the need, in which they stand of a Redeemer, who hath *all power in Heaven and in earth*, if they *harden not* their hearts; if they stand, like the first sinner, *naked* and trembling before God, having received *the sentence of death* in themselves—In a word, when they cry out, like the publicans and soldiers alarmed by the preaching of John, *what shall we do?* They are then properly disposed to receive *the glorious Gospel of Christ*, and will be enabled to experience its powerful effects. From this time, the evangelical pastor affectionately preaches remission of sins through *faith* in the name of a merciful Redeemer.

This is the very same method, which Christ and his forerunner pursued. *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world*, was the cry of John the Baptist. And *blessed*, said our Lord, 'are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever BELIEVETH in

him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. He that BELIEVETH on the Son, hath everlasting life : and he, that BELIEVETH not the Son, shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him. Whosoever shall drink of the water, that I shall give him, shall never thirst ; but *it* shall be in him a well of water, *a source of sacred consolation*, springing up into everlasting life.' Again, when it was enquired by the multitude, ' what shall we do, that we may work the works of God ? Jesus said unto them, this is the work of God, that ye BELIEVE on him, whom he hath sent. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son and BELIEVETH on him, may have everlasting life : and I will raise him up at the last day.' Thus it was, that our adorable Master proclaimed salvation through *faith* in himself : and, indeed, it was for this end alone, that he appeared upon earth ; as we learn from the last address he made to his disciples—*It behoved*, said he, *Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, that remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*, the abode of his murderers.

Observe the great commission given to those messengers of peace. *Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature ; he that BELIEVETH and is baptized shall be saved ; but he that BELIEVETH not shall be damned.* To the same purpose was the commission, with which the Apostle Paul was afterwards honoured. ' I have appeared unto thee' said the persecuted Jesus, ' for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness to the gentiles, unto whom I now send thee, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified, by FAITH that is in me.

The Apostles unanimously preached in obedience to the orders, and in conformity to the example, of their benevolent Lord. And all true ministers, instructed by the same divine teacher, continue to proclaim the glad tidings of the Gospel through *faith* in Jesus Christ ; laying as much stress, in all their sermons, upon this efficacious grace, as the Apostle of the gentiles was accustomed to do, in all his epistles. Take a few instances of St. Paul's usual custom in this respect.—After having convinced the Romans of their corruption and misery, he sets before them ' the redemption that is

in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through *FAITH* in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past : that he might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Therefore,' continues he, *being justified by FAITH we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ,* To the Corinthians he writes— ' Brethren I declare unto you the Gospel, which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand ; by which also ye are saved, unless ye have BELIEVED in vain. For ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus. God hath reconciled us to himself, by Jesus Christ, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation : to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them :— For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' —To the Galatians.— ' Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law, but by the *FAITH* of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by *FAITH*, and not by the works of the Law.' Before *FAITH* ' came, we were kept under the Law. Wherefore the Law was our schoolmaster to bring as unto Christ : but after that *FAITH* is come, we are no more under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by *FAITH* in Christ Jesus.' To the Ephesians— ' Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath made us accepted in the Beloved : in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins. By grace are ye saved, through *FAITH* : and that not of yourselves ; it is the gift of God : not of works lest any man should boast. Finally, my brethren,—put on the whole armour of God—above all, taking the shield of *FAITH*, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.' To the Philippians.— ' Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the *FAITH* of the Gospel. We rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.—Yea, I count all things but loss, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the *FAITH* of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by *FAITH*.' To the Colossians.— ' It pleased the Father, that in him [the Son] should all fulness dwell ; and (having

made peace through the blood of his cross) by him to reconcile all things unto himself. And you, that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable in his sight; if ye continue grounded and settled in the FAITH. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the FAITH, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.' To the Thessalonians.—' Let us, who are of the day be sober, putting on the breast-plate of FAITH: for God hath not appointed us unto wrath; but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, because that your FAITH groweth exceedingly. Now the Lord shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that BELIEVE. Wherefore we pray that our God would fulfil in you the work of FAITH with power; that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you and you in him.' To Timothy.—' This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter BELIEVE on him to life everlasting. For God our Saviour will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth: For their is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all. Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of Angels, preached unto the gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. God hath saved us,' [that is to say, hath put us in possession of the same present salvation, which the sinful woman experienced, who, while she prostrated herself at the feet of Jesus, in faith and prayer, received from him these consolatory sentences; ' Thy sins are forgiven thee. Thy FAITH hath saved thee; go in peace.] God hath saved us, not according to our works, but according to his own grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus—who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.'

To Titus.—‘ Paul an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to Titus mine own son after the common FAITH: grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. We ourselves were sometimes disobedient, but after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us—that being justified by his grace we should be made heirs of eternal life.’ To Philemon he writes—‘ Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God, hearing of thy FAITH, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus Christ. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.’ Thus a persecuted Saviour became the *Alpha and the Omega* of this great Apostle.

In his epistle to the Hebrews he uses the same language. It begins and concludes with Him who is *the Beginning and the End* of all things. God, saith he, ‘ hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, by whom also he made the worlds. Who being the brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. It became Him, for whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their Salvation perfect through sufferings. Forasmuch then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself took part of the same; that through death, He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them, who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Though he were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect He became the author of eternal salvation. This man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. Having, therefore, an High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near in full assurance of FAITH. Now FAITH is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen: for by

it the elders obtained a good report, who through FAITH subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouth of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Wherefore, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our FAITH. Now the God of peace—make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ: to whom be glory for ever and ever.'

The same Saviour, whom St. Paul was so anxious to declare in his epistles, he as constantly preached in his sermons. He was no sooner converted, but, *straightway*, says St. Luke, *he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.* Take an abridgement of the first of his sermons, which is left upon record, and which was preached at Antioch in Pisidia. After asserting the fulfilment of that glorious promise, which had been anciently given respecting the birth of our omnipotent Saviour, he cries out; *Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.* For the inhabitants and rulers of Jerusalem, *because they knew him not*, nor understood the sense of those prophecies, which are read *every sabbath-day*, have given them their sad completion, by *condemning* the Lord of life and glory. 'Though they found no cause of death in Him, yet desired they Pilate, that He should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they laid him in a sepulchre.' But GOD, after three days, raised him triumphantly from the grave: *and He was seen many days* of his wondering disciples, whom He continued to visit and instruct even after his resurrection, that they might become *his witnesses to the people.* And now, 'We declare unto you, that God hath fulfilled the promise which was made unto the fathers, in that He hath raised up Jesus' from the dead. 'Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him, all that believe, are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses. Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the Prophets. Behold, ye despisers,

and wonder and perish : for I work a work in your days, a work which you shall in no wise BELIEVE, though a man declare it unto you.' When the cross of Christ and its happy effects are thus faithfully declared, the word of GOD is never wholly preached in vain. Some, it is true, will always reject, and count themselves *unworthy of everlasting life* : But others will rejoice in the truth, glorifying the word of the Lord ; and all those, who, by a true poverty of spirit are disposed for eternal life, shall effectually believe.

Sometime afterwards, St. Paul delivered a sermon in the prison at Philippi, the capital of Macedonia, St. Luke, his historian, has not favoured us with this discourse, but he has transmitted to us the subject-matter of it. Despairing sinner, said the Apostle to the affrighted jailor, who lay trembling at his feet, *believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house*. After hearing thus much, the astonished man collected his family together, and the Apostle continued his discourse, declaring unto them all *the word of the Lord*. Such are the small remains we are able to collect of this excellent sermon. But though we are unacquainted with its several parts, we know that it was attended with the happiest effects : for before the return of day, this converted jailor, snatched from the very brink of destruction, was seen, with all his believing family, rejoicing in God.

When the same Apostle was afterwards appointed to speak before the senate at Athens, he could not, with propriety, set before those unhumbled philosophers, *the mystery of the Gospel*. But after bearing a public testimony against their superstition and idolatry, he pressed upon them the necessity of an unfeigned repentance : announcing Christ as an omniscient Judge, that he might afterwards proclaim him as the compassionate Saviour of men. To the same purpose was that other sermon of his, which was delivered before the tribunal of Felix ; when the Roman Governor was seen to tremble under the power of an Apostle's preaching. The little effect produced by these two last-mentioned discourses, may be brought as a proof, that the most momentous truths are hidden *from the wise and prudent*, while they are *revealed unto babes*.

It was by proclaiming the same mighty Saviour, that St. Stephen obtained for himself the first crown of martyrdom among the christians. Behold an abridgement of his cele-

brated apology. *Men, brethren, and fathers*, you accuse me of having spoken blasphemously against Moses. But, on the contrary, I publicly acknowledge him as the deliverer of our fathers, and gladly embrace this opportunity of reasoning with you from the character of that favoured Prophet. *He once supposed*, that by certain of his actions, *his brethren would have understood, how that God by his hand would deliver them.* But so far were they from understanding any such matter, that one of them thrust him away, crying out in an insulting manner, *Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us ? This Moses*, however, *whom they thus refused*, was chosen of God, to be their future prince and deliverer. ‘ This is that Moses, who said unto the children of Israel, a Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me ;’ a Prophet, whom you will at first reject, as you rejected me ; but who, nevertheless, when you shall receive him, will deliver you out of spiritual Egypt, as I once delivered you from the land of bondage, when you gave credence to my word. This promised Saviour has already made his appearance among us, whom ye have rejected to your own condemnation. As our fathers rejected Moses in the wilderness, thrusting him from them, and in their hearts turning back again into Egypt ; so you have rejected your great Deliverer. ‘ Ye uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost : as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the Prophets have not your fathers persecuted ? And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the just one, of whom, ye have been now the betrayers and murderers : ye who have received the Law by the disposition of Angels and have not kept it.’

That the powerful preaching of the Gospel is sometimes made the *savour of death unto death*, is sufficiently clear from the following account. After Stephen had finished this discourse, the hearts of his hearers were transported with rage, insomuch that *They gnashed upon him with their teeth.* Mean-while the holy martyr continued to proclaim Christ, and, far from being intimidated by their threatenings, looking stedfastly up to heaven, in a kind of ecstasy, produced by the strength of his faith, the vigour of his hope, and the ardour of his love, he cried out : *I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.* And while the multitude

ran upon him with stones, after committing his own soul to the care of his exalted Saviour, he cried, with a loud voice, *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.* Behold an apology, which was looked upon by the preachers of that day, as replete with ignorance and fanaticism, though delivered by an Evangelist, who was filled with faith, with power, and with the Holy Ghost!

The same doctrine was preached by the Evangelists, who were dispersed abroad by the persecution excited against Stephen, and was followed by the benediction of the Lord. For we find, that some of them entering into the city of Antioch, spake unto the Grecians there, preaching the Lord Jesus, and *the hand of the Lord was with them*, so that a great number BELIEVED and turned unto the Lord.

We shall go on to select a few proofs, that all the Apostles were of one heart in this matter, preaching Jesus Christ as the Saviour of all those, who believe in him.

Though St. James professedly wrote his epistle against the error of those, who had destroyed the law of charity, by an *imaginary* faith in Christ, yet so far is he from despising the *substantial* faith of believers, that, as *the servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ*, he exhorts false brethren to seek after and manifest it by its proper fruits. He even employs a species of irony to point out the necessity of this powerful grace: *Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.* He intimates, that our faith must be tried by *divers temptations*, in order to our becoming *perfect and entire* before God: whence we learn that, according to his judgment, the perfection of christians absolutely depends upon the perfection of their FAITH. On this account, he exhorts us to ask wisdom *in* FAITH. And lastly, he declares that the prayer of FAITH shall be powerful enough to procure health for the sick, and remission for the sinful.

There needs no more than an attentive perusal of this epistle, to convince us, that St. James announces a faith which saves the christian, by producing in him hope, charity, and every good work.

The same doctrine was inculcated by St. Peter both in his sermons and epistles. Three thousand souls were converted; while he cried out, upon the day of Pentecost: 'Ye men of Israel, Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles and wonders and signs; him, being

delivered by the determinate counsel of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he,' who is 'the resurrection and the life, should be holden of it. This Jesus, therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. Therefore, let all the house of Israel, assuredly know, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.' Now when the convicted multitude enquired in their distress, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* Peter answered and said: *repent and be baptized every one of you* [that is to say, first cordially believe, and then by baptism make a public confession of that faith] *in the name of Jesue Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

His second discourse was to the same effect. 'The God of our fathers hath glorified his son Jesus, whom ye delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye desired a murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. And FAITH in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know; yea the FAITH which is by him, hath given him this perfect soundness, in the presence of you all.—And now brethren, repent ye and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.'

His apology before the council was founded upon the same divine truths. 'Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other Name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.' Thus St. Peter, 'filled with the Holy Ghost, spake the word of God with boldness, and with great power gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.' Even after being commanded to speak no more in the name of Jesus, he departed from the council, rejoicing that he was counted worthy to suffer shame

for his Master's sake : *and daily in the temple, and in every house, he ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.*

The fourth sermon of this Apostle perfectly corresponds with the foregoing. This discourse was delivered in the house of Cornelius the centurion, to whom an Angel had before revealed, that Peter should declare unto him things whereby both himself and his house should be saved. Of all the sermons which have ever been preached, this was, perhaps, the most effectual ; since it is observed, that *the Holy Ghost fell on ALL them, which heard the word.* Take an abridgement of this powerful discourse. GOD hath proclaimed peace *to the children of Israel, by Jesus Christ, whom they slew and hanged on a tree.* But *He*, being raised again by the power of GOD, ‘ commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify, that it is He which was ordained of God, to be the judge of quick and dead. To Him give all the Prophets witness, that whosoever BELIEVETH in him shall receive remission of sins.’

And, as in his sermons, so also in his epistles, St. Peter was ever anxious to declare salvation through *faith*, in the name of Jesus Christ.

‘ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the elect of God, Blessed be God, who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, reserved in Heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God, through FAITH, unto salvation. It is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious : and he, that BELIEVETH on Him, shall not be confounded. Unto you, therefore, which BELIEVE, He is precious : but unto them, which be disobedient, He is made a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence.’

The second epistle of St. Peter was written for the confirmation of the weak, and the establishment of the strong. In the first verse, Christ is represented as the author and finisher of our *faith* : in the last, the *glory* of our salvation is expressly ascribed to the same divine person : and these two verses may be given, as an abridgement of the whole epistle.

This powerful *faith*, and this adorable Saviour, were as constantly proclaimed by the Apostle John. Though St. Luke has not transmitted to us any extracts from his dis-

courses, yet his doctrine is sufficiently manifested in his epistles.

If any man sin, saith this favoured Apostle, ‘we have an Advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins. He was manifested to take away our sins—And this is the commandment of God, that we should BELIEVE on the name of his Son Jesus Christ. Whosoever BELIEVETH, is born of God—whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our FAITH. These things have I written unto you that BELIEVE on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may’ yet more stedfastly BELIEVE.

Many deceivers, continues the same Apostle in his second epistle, ‘have entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an Antichrist. Whosoever abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God; he, that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, hath both the Father and the Son.’ Here St. John, foreseeing the melancholy revolution that would one day be effected in the church by these antichristian teachers, notwithstanding his natural gentleness, cries out against them, with an holy indignation; ‘if there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. For he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds.’

In this third epistle, he expresses the utmost joy over Gaius, on account of his steady adherence to the truth; assuring him, that he had no greater joy, than to hear that his children continued to walk in the truths of the Gospel. He commends his charity toward the people of God, and exhorts him to continue a fellow-helper to the truth, by affording an hospitable reception to those, who, with a view of spreading that truth, were journeying from place to place.

St. Jude, in his short epistle, writes thus—‘Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the FAITH which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy FAITH, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the

love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life.'

The concluding book of the new testament abounds with striking testimonies to the foregoing truths, and was added for the consolation of the church in every age. It opens with a sublime eulogy pronounced upon that incomprehensible Saviour, who is 'the Alpha and Omega, the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth, who hath loved and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his father, for ever and ever.'

The faithful, who groan in secret, to behold their Master rejected by deists, and neglected by the greater part of christians, attend, with holy transport, to the representations here given, by St. John. Here they perceive that condescending Saviour, who was dishonoured upon earth, acknowledged and adored by the hosts of Heaven. They see the prostrate elders, and behold the innumerable multitude of the redeemed assembled before the throne. They hear that new song of adoration, in which Angels and the spirits of just men made perfect unanimously cry out; *Worthy is the Lamb, that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.* These are scenes, which the believer is assisted to realize, by means of a lively *faith*, and in which he already bears an humble part, ascribing, with his more exalted brethren, *blessing and honour and glory and power unto him, that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.*

This mysterious book concludes with that short prayer of St. John, which shall one day be offered up with the energy of the Holy Spirit, by ten thousand times ten thousand of the faithful—*Come, Lord Jesus, fully to accomplish thy gracious promises.*

If it be here enquired; Do not all ministers maintain this *scriptural faith*? I answer: It is a rare thing, with the generality of ministers, to treat on a point of so vast importance: and even when they are heard to speak of this mighty grace, they represent it as something manifestly different from that *living faith*, by which we are regenerated. If ever they discourse with their catechumens on this subject, they speak as men, who attempt to teach what they have yet to learn. They frequently repeat the word *faith*, but are unable to

open its spiritual signification. They take it for granted, that all their neighbours are possessed of this grace, except those who openly reject the word of God: and thus they become perfectly satisfied with that species of faith, against which St. Paul and St. James were authorized to denounce the anathemas of the Gospel. On this account, one of the last texts a worldly pastor would make choice of, is that solemn exhortation of the Apostle; *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the FAITH: prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?* The faith, with which he contents himself, and which he publishes to others, may be equally possessed, by those, who are conformable to this present evil world, and those, who *have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.* It belongs to self-exalting pharisees, who boast of their own righteousness, as well as to those humble believers, who count themselves unworthy of the benefits they have received.

Further; so far is the ill-instructed minister from preaching the *true* faith, that he is always prepared to plead against it. In confirmation of this melancholy truth, take the following relation. A believer, whose circumstances frequently engaged him in conversation with a worldly man of his neighbourhood, once took occasion to offer him such advice, as brotherly charity suggested. After the customary civilities, Sir, said he, we have lived as neighbours long enough to know one another, and, I presume, the intimacy of our acquaintance authorizes us to speak to each other without any reserve. It has given me real satisfaction to observe your constant attendance at our church, and your strict attention to her most solemn services. Nevertheless, permit me to express my fears, that you are not yet seeking the Kingdom of God, with that earnestness and solicitude, without which it can never be obtained. Though you are constant at church, yet you are as constant at tables of festivity; and an approaching entertainment appears to afford you greater pleasure, than an approaching sacrament. I regularly observe the gazette upon your table, with a variety of new and ingenious publications: but I have never found you perusing the sacred pages of a more important volume. I have heard you speak, in an agreeable manner, upon twenty different things; but cannot recollect, that your conversation ever turned upon what our Lord has described, as the *one thing needful.* In

short, Sir, I apprehend from your conduct, that you are altogether unacquainted with *evangelical faith* : and if so, your hope is as fallacious, as your devotion is pharisaical. *Neighbour*. I am obliged, Sir, by the interest you appear to take in my salvation ; but allow me to say, with Solomon, there is a time for all things. *Believer*. Yes, Sir ; for all that is good. But, if you really believe there is a time for all things, is it not amazing, that, after you have found four seasons in every day convenient for eating and drinking in your family, you should find no proper opportunity, through the whole course of a week, to pour out your prayers with that family before God ? *Neighbour*. It is true, I do not pique myself upon my piety : and I will confess to you, that I frequent the church and the holy communion, rather out of decency than choice. But, notwithstanding this, my faith is as orthodox as that of my neighbours. We all believe in God, as our Creator, and in Christ, as our Redeemer, except some few persons who glory in trampling all revelation under foot. For my own part, I have never erred from the faith, since I first became acquainted with the Apostles' creed ; and that was so early in life, that I cannot now recollect who first instructed me in it. *Believer*. It seems then, neighbour, that you imbibed your faith, as you drew in your nurse's milk : and you have learned to believe in Christ, rather than Mahomet, because you happened to be taught the English, rather than the Turkish language. *Neighbour*. That may be. However, if I had been a Mahometan, I trust, I might also have been an honest man. *I give to every one his due*. This is the grand principle upon which I have always acted, and from this, I leave every rational man to form a judgment of my faith. *Believer*. Ah Sir ! if such are the principles, by which your conduct is regulated, then make a full surrender of your heart to God, and consecrate to his service those powers of body and soul, which you have received from his bounty, and to which he has so just a title. But, alas ! without piety, your *strict justice* is like the fidelity of a subject, who fulfils his engagements with a few particular persons, while he withholds the homage due to his rightful sovereign. If such a subject can be termed *faithful*, then may you, with propriety, be accounted *just*, while you offer not to God that tribute of love, gratitude, adoration, and obedience, which is your reasonable service. You made a confession but

now, that you pique not yourself upon your piety : it would not have astonished me more, had you said, that you piqued not yourself upon paying your debts, and acting with common honesty in the world. Alas, Sir, your boasted principles do but confirm the fears, to which your conduct had given rise. I entreat you, in the most solemn manner, “ examine yourself, whether you be in the *faith*.” *Neighbour*. What do you call *faith* ? *Believer*. The scriptures teach us, that we must believe with the heart, and that FAITH is *the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*. He, therefore, who truly believes in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, carries within him a lively demonstration of the Almighty’s presence, which penetrates him with sentiments of fear, respect, and love, for a Being so powerful, just, and good : he possesses an internal evidence of the affection of that Redeemer, upon whom alone he grounds his hope of salvation, saluting him, with Nathaniel, as *the Son of God, the King of Israel* : and he discovers in his own heart, the most indisputable testimonies of the sanctifying and consoling operations of the Holy Spirit. Now, from this three-fold demonstration, he is enabled to say, with suitable sentiments of gratitude and devotion, ‘ Behold what manner of love the father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God : He hath made us accepted in the Beloved, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins ; and the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.’ Tell me, then, since you boast of having received the christian faith, have you ever experienced those salutary effects of faith, which I have now described ? *Neighbour*. If that demonstration, and that lively representation of which you speak, are essential to christian faith, I must confess that to such a faith I am a perfect stranger. But the writings of St. Paul, whose definition of faith you have just cited, are generally looked upon as remarkably dark and mysterious : I wish you had rather quoted St. John. *Believer*. I doubt, Sir, whether you will gain any thing by such an appeal. *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, faith St. John, is born of God. This is the victory, that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he, that overcometh the world, but he that believeth, that Jesus is the Son of God ?* You perceive, Sir, that, according to this Apostle, *faith* is a principle of grace and power, sufficiently forcible

and victorious to regenerate and make us partakers of the divine nature, enabling us to triumph equally over the most seducing, as well as the most afflicting occurrences in the world. Have you obtained, or have you even sought the *faith*, of which such excellent things are spoken? *Neighbour*. You embarrass me. I never heard the least intimation of such a *faith* in this country. *Believer*. Indeed, Sir, you are in an error, since this very *faith* is plainly set forth in the xvth chapter of the Helvetic Confession. "The christian faith [say the pious ministers who composed that work] is not "a mere human *opinion* or *persuasion*, but a state of *full assurance*; it not only gives a constant and clear assent to, "but also comprehends and embraces the truths of God, as "proposed to us in the Apostles' creed. The soul, by this "act, unites itself to God, as to its only, eternal, and sovereign good, and to Jesus Christ, as the centre of all the "promises." Have you, then, this *divine persuasion*, this *full assurance* of the truths of our holy religion? And have you experienced this act, by which the soul is united to God, through Christ, as to its sovereign good? *Neighbour*. I have, undoubtedly, a persuasion, that the word of God is true. But how may I absolutely determine, whether or no I am a possessor of the *faith*, of which you speak? *Believer*. If you are possessed of *faith*, you have some experimental knowledge of those happy effects of that grace, which are thus enumerated, in the same confession. "True faith restores "peace to the conscience. It procures a free access to God, "enabling us both to approach him with confidence, and to "obtain from him the things, of which we stand in need. "It retains us in the path of obedience, enduing us with "power to fulfil our several duties both to God and to our "neighbour. It maintains our patience in adversity, and disposes us, at all times, to a sincere confession of our confidence. "To sum up all in a single word, it produces every good "work." "Let it be observed [says the same confession] "that we do not here speak of a pretended faith, which is "vain, ineffectual and dead, but of a living, effectual and "vivifying faith. This is a doctrine, which St. James cannot be understood to combat, seeing he speaks of a vain "and presumptuous confidence, of which some were known "to boast, while they had not Christ living in them by means "of faith." *Neighbour*. "Christ living in them by means of

"*faith*." I pray, Sir, what is to be understood by this expression? I do not comprehend the thing. But, if I recollect, I shall have an opportunity in a few hours, of mentioning the matter to our pastor, whom I expect here this evening to make up a party at cards. The true believer, after thanking his worldly neighbour for the patience with which he had listened to his conversation, took his leave, and withdrew, apprehending every evil consequence from the decision of a pastor, who was known to indulge a taste for play and vain amusement. His fears were too well founded. The minister, true to his engagement, arrived at the appointed hour, and the gentleman thus eagerly addressed him: I have been receiving some singular advice from a person of a very unaccountable turn, who appears to agree either with the mystics or the pietists. He spoke much of *faith*, asserting, that all true christians are really regenerate, and that they *have Christ living in them by faith*. What think you, Sir, of such assertions as these? I will tell you freely, replied the minister, that these abstruse points of doctrine are among those profound mysteries, which neither you nor I are appointed to fathom. It is usual with enthusiasts to speak in this manner; but such mystic jargon is now out of season. There have been ages, in which divines were accustomed to speculate concerning this *faith*, and publicly to insist upon it in their sermons. But, in an age like this, enlightened by sound philosophy and learned discoveries, we no longer admit what we cannot comprehend. I advise you, as a friend, to leave these idle subtilties close shut up in the unintelligible volumes of our ancient theologists. The only material thing, is to conduct ourselves as honest men. If we receive revelation in a general sense, and have good works to produce, there can be no doubt but our *faith* is of the proper kind, and highly acceptable before God. To this short discourse, the card table succeeded, which served to strengthen the bands of intimacy, between the careless clergyman and his deluded neighbour: so perfectly alike were their *faith* and their *manners*.

The circumstances alluded to in the above relation, are not imaginary; and there is every reason to fear, that circumstances of the same nature, are no less common in other christian countries, than in that, which gave birth to the writer of these pages.

Thus the worldly minister, instead of preaching this important doctrine in its purity, seeks to destroy even the curiosity, which would engage an irreligious man to enquire into the necessity, the nature, the origin, and the effects of *evangelical faith*. And while the generality of those, who are required to publish this victorious grace, are seen to reject it with contempt, no wonder that the true minister esteems himself obliged to *contend* for it, with encreasing *earnestness*, both in public and in private.

To close this section. When the christian minister proclaims salvation by *faith*, he adheres not only to the holy scriptures, but also to those public confessions of faith, which are in common use among the churches of Christ. "We believe," say the churches of France, "that every thing necessary to our salvation, was revealed and offered to us in Christ, who is made unto us *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*." Art. xiii. "We believe, that we are made partakers of righteousness by faith alone; since it is said, that he [Christ] suffered in order to procure salvation for us, and that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish." Art. xx. "We believe, that we are illuminated by faith, through the secret grace of the Holy Spirit." Art. xxi. "We believe that, by this faith, we are regenerated to newness of life, being by nature in bondage to sin. So that faith, instead of cooling in us the desire of living righteously and godly, naturally tends to excite such desire, and necessarily produces every good work." Art. xxii.

Such also is the doctrine of the Helvetic Confession. "We believe, with St. Paul, that sinful man is justified by faith alone in Jesus Christ, and not by the law. Faith receives Jesus, who is our righteousness; and on this account justification is attributed to faith. That by means of faith we receive Jesus Christ, he himself has taught us in the Gospel, where he significantly uses the terms applied to *eating* for *believing*: For, as by eating we receive bodily nourishment, so by believing, we are made partakers of Christ." Chap. xv. "Man is not regenerated by faith, that he should continue in a state of indolence, but rather that he should apply himself, without ceasing, to the performance of those things, which are useful, and good: since the Lord hath said, *every good tree bringeth*

“ forth good fruit : He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.”

The church of England expresses herself in the following terms upon salvation by *faith*, and the good works produced by that faith. “ We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works and deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.” Art. xi. “ Good works do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith, insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known, as a tree discerned by the fruit.” Art. xii.

THE TRUE MINISTER GOES ON TO ANNOUNCE A LIVELY HOPE.

GODLINESS *with contentment is great gain* : And the Pastor, who is possessed of so invaluable a blessing, cannot be backward in soliciting all, within the circle of his acquaintance, to share it with him. Happy in the enjoyment of that precious secret, which enables him to rejoice without ceasing, he readily communicates it to the afflicted, by leading them to that *lively hope*, which consoles and sustains the heart of every believer.

In a world, where the bitterness of evil is continually increasing ; where we discover the scourges of a God, who will not fail to chastize his rebellious creatures ; where disappointment and death successively deprive us of our dearest comforts, and where the forerunners of death are continually weakening all our imperfect enjoyments : in such a world, it is evident, that the most exalted pleasure we are capable of, must spring from a well-grounded hope of those immortal joys, which are reserved for the righteous. The language of mortality is too feeble to describe either the power, or the sweetness of such an hope. Here we can only cry out with the Psalmist, *O taste, and see how gracious the Lord is*, in providing so potent a cordial for those, who are travelling through a vale of tears.

The lively hope, which gives birth to a believer's felicity,

is one of the most exhilarating fruits of his faith, and is inseparably connected with it, since *true faith is the substance of things hoped for*. In proportion as the truths and promises, upon which faith is founded, are evidenced and apprehended, such will be the hope with which that faith is accompanied. If Moses then, by the faith which he professed, was enabled to renounce the prospect of an earthly crown, with the hope of obtaining a more glorious inheritance; if he esteemed *the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, having respect unto the recompence of reward*; what may not be expected from an hope founded upon those precious promises, which have been sealed with the blood of that condescending Saviour; who ‘brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel? The law, saith the Apostle, made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God. Seeing then, that we have such hope,’ continues the same Apostle, ‘we all, with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory.’

We every day observe the men of the world exulting in the hope of some temporal advantage. The prospect of an honourable title, an augmentation of fortune, an advantageous marriage, or even a poor party of pleasure, is sufficient to allure, to animate, to enrapture them. They will even acknowledge, that the flattering hope of future pleasure is sweeter than enjoyment itself. Who then shall attempt to declare those transports, which flow from the lively hope of a triumphing christian? A *hope* which is founded upon the *Rock of ages*, and which has for its object, riches, honours and pleasures, as much superior to those of worldly men, as the soul is superior to the body, heaven to earth, and eternity to the present fleeting moment.

The true minister publicly announces this hope to the world, persuaded that, if mankind were once happy enough to possess it, they would exchange a load of misery for a prospect of blessedness. But since he knows, that this hope can never be admitted into hearts replete with sin, his first concern is to overthrow the vain confidence of the impenitent, to undermine the presumption of the pharisaical, and to point out the true distinction between a sinner’s groundless expectation, and the well-founded hope of a believer in Christ.

In every place, there are many to be found, who, without *evangelical faith* or *hope*, are filled with a presumption as blind as that of the Pharisees, and as fatal as that of Heathens hardened in their sin. To every such person, the true minister uniformly declares, that he is *without Christ*, without *hope*, and *without God in the world*. These very men, it is probable, may offer to the Deity a formal worship, and indulge high expectations from the mercy of a divine Mediator, though they are totally destitute of an unfeigned *repentance toward God*, and a true *faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*. Thus far the unconverted may proceed in a seemingly religious course. But the regenerate alone can truly say, ‘The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world: looking for that blessed *HOPE*, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.’

The hope of unrighteous men is founded upon pride, false notions of the Deity, ignorance of his law, and those prejudices, which the irreligious communicate one to another. On the contrary, the hope of believers has for its basis, the word of him *who cannot lie*. *Whatsoever things were written aforetime*, saith the Apostle, *were written for our learning, that we* [the children of God] *through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope*. It is founded not only upon the word, but equally upon the oath, of God. ‘Men verily swear by the greater; and an oath, for confirmation, is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an OATH: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie’ [namely his word and his oath] ‘we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the *HOPE* set before us, which *HOPE* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast.’

When the faithful minister has rooted up every false hope, he then announces Jesus Christ, who hath brought in a *better hope* than that of Heathens or Jews. Observe here the reason, why those pastors, who preach not Christ, are incapable of doing any thing toward the furtherance of that *living faith*, of which Christ is the grand object, and that

lively hope, of which he is the inexhaustible source. *Jesus Christ*, saith St. Paul, *is our hope*: and we declare unto you, *the mystery, which hath been hid from ages*, and is still hidden from worldly men, *which is Christ in you, the HOPE of glory*. Thus the everlasting Son of the Father, is made to his true followers the beginning, and the consummation of *hope*, as well as *the author and finisher of our faith*.

By the mercy of God, and through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, the believer has already received the promise of a free pardon for past offences: otherwise he deserves not to be termed a *believer*; at least, he is destitute of *evangelical faith*. But when he sincerely receives the glad tidings of redeeming grace, he then receives Jesus Christ, in whom *all the promises are yea and amen*: and he would conduct himself in a manner, contrary to that, which both reason and scripture prescribe, if he should refuse to rejoice in God his Saviour. By such a mode of acting, he would prove his want of *gratitude* for that, which Christ hath already done, and of *hope* for that, which he hath promised still to perform. But when he gives himself up to a joy, as reasonable, as it is refreshing, he then answers the gracious designs of his benevolent Lord. Continually taken up with more satisfactory enjoyments, he despises the seducing pleasures of sin. He carries in his own bosom a source of celestial pleasure, while the man of the world disquiets his heart in the vain pursuit of earthly joys. The difference between the enjoyments of these two characters is as great, as betwixt the rational pleasure of those, who gather their wheat into the barn, and the puerile mirth of children, who are busied in collecting the scattered straws and thorns; the former are securing an inestimable treasure, while the latter have nothing more in view, than to dance round a short-lived blaze, the truest emblem of a sinner's satisfaction.

In the Holy Scriptures very excellent things are spoken of the hope which produces this sacred joy. 1. It is a *divine hope*, since it has for its objects the enjoyment of God, and because it draws supplies of strength from that Holy Spirit, which discovers to believers the greatness and stability of gospel promises. Thus St. Paul teacheth us, that *the Father of glory* giveth us, 'the spirit of wisdom and revelation; enlightening the eyes of our understanding, that

we may know what is the HOPE of our calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance among the saints.'

2. It gives honour to the faithfulness and power of God. Abraham, saith St. Paul, against all human probability, believing in HOPE, ' staggered not at the promise ; but was strong in faith giving glory to God : being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform. Therefore, being justified,' like Abraham, *by faith, we rejoice*, continues the Apostle, with a confidence like his, *in hope of the glory of God. And this HOPE maketh not ashamed.* How unlike the fallacious hope of worldly men, who are frequently put to shame by their blasted expectations.

3. This HOPE is said to fill us with a holy joy. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, saith St. Peter, *who hath begotten us again unto a lively HOPE, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Wherein ye greatly rejoice.* And on this account it was, that the Apostle Paul prayed, with so much ardour, for an increase of hope among believers—*Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in HOPE through the power of the Holy Ghost.*

4. It actually saves us, as St. Paul himself declares in the following words : *I reckon, that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. And, supported by this sweet persuasion, we wait for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For, in this respect, we are saved by HOPE.*

5. It is equally sweet and solid ; since it rests upon the right which the children of God may claim to the inheritance of their heavenly Father ; a sacred right, which is confirmed to them with the utmost solemnity in the new Testament. Now every man, who receives, with sincerity, the Lord of life and glory, receives with him a title to everlasting possessions, and ranks, from that moment, among *the sons of God.* So that to such, the following passages may, with propriety, be applied—' He hath made us accepted in the beloved—In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation : in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.

6. It purifies us. *Now are we*, saith St. John, ' the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear, what we shall be : but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him ;

for we shall see him as he is. And every man, that hath this HOPE in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure. Whosoever is born of God,' or regenerated by a true faith and a lively hope, *doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.* The truth of this assertion is clear to the eye of reason. We fall into sin, because we suffer ourselves to be seduced by the allurements of some transitory good, which presents itself either to our senses or imagination. But when we are once persuaded, that infinite enjoyments await us, we can then look with contempt upon those deceitful appearances: and after our hearts are animated with a confident hope of possessing those invisible realities, the charm of sin is broken. In such a state we break through temptations with as much resolution as a prince, who is going to take possession of a kingdom, renounces the little amusements, that occupied his thoughts before they were engrossed by a concern of so vast importance. *Who is he that overcometh the world, except the man who believes with that faith, which affords him a lively representation of things hoped for?* Compare 1 John v. 5. with Heb. xi. 1.

7. This lively hope produces charity in the soul. *We give thanks to God, saith the Apostle, praying always for you, since we heard of the love, which ye have to all the saints; for the HOPE, which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the Gospel.* Nay, of so prevailing an influence is this solid hope, that the Apostle intimates, in the same chapter, that believers shall be presented before GOD, *holy and unblameable*, provided they be not moved away from the HOPE of the Gospel. For, continues he, 'we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end. And we desire, that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises.'

8. This hope is full of consolation. *We, who remain, saith the Apostle, 'shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.* Wherefore comfort one another with these words. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good

hope through grace, comfort your hearts.' When we observe among us some, who are disquieted and cast down, who want courage to support affliction without impatience, and to fill up their duties with cheerfulness, we then behold persons who never enjoyed, or who have unhappily lost, the lively hope of true christians. If all ministers of the Gospel had experienced the sweetness and power of this hope, with what pleasure would they publish it to the afflicted. And with what perseverance would they join to their discourses the most ardent prayers, that all their hearers might come to the enjoyment of so invaluable a blessing.

When the true minister leads his flock to this lively and joyful hope, he treads in the footsteps of his divine Master. Christ, it is true, began his ministry by preaching repentance. But in the very next chapter we find him placing before the believer's eye, beatitudes and promises of the most consolatory nature. And in a variety of passages, he exhorts his followers to the exercise of a joyful hope in the severest trials, making that an indispensable duty, which is indeed a glorious privilege. *Fear not them*, saith he, 'which are not able to kill the soul—The very hairs of your head are all numbered—whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. Fear not little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.'

He appears anxious, that his people should be partakers of his peace, his joy, and his hope, till they come to the possession of consummate blessedness. *These things have I spoken*, saith he, 'that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. Let not your heart be troubled. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. Ye now have sorrow: But I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.' He exhorts them continually to expect his return; and even condescends to mention the very terms in which he will, at that time, salute every waiting believer.

The prayers of Christ, as well as his exhortations and pro-

mises, tend to produce and support the most exalted hope in the souls of believers. He has graciously interceded for them; he still continues to make intercession, and his prayer is always prevalent. Mark a few sentences of that memorable prayer, which he once offered up for all his followers, and which forms the xviith chapter of St. John's Gospel. 'O Father! I pray not for the world, but for them, which thou hast given me. Holy Father! keep, through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me: and sanctify them through thy truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also, which shall believe on me through their word; that they may all be one, even as we are one. Father! I will, that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.'

A lively hope founded upon these prayers and declarations of the blessed Jesus, enabled the primitive christians to triumph over every affliction. In the midst of the most terrible persecutions, they could congratulate one another on their common blessedness, and say; *Our life is hid with Christ in God; and when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory.* For he shall yet come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.

The Apostles, agreeable to the example of their Master, were unanimous in publishing this glorious hope: and St. Paul very frequently insists upon it, as a most important duty. *Let us, saith he, who are of the day be sober, putting on the breast-plate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation. I beseech you, brethren, present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God—rejoicing in hope. Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice.* This evangelical hope will ever be experienced, as a never-failing source of consolation and thankfulness: and hence, wherever the hope of the Gospel is preached, there believers continue to be *filled with unspeakable joy.* How truly happy would christians be, were such an hope to flourish among them! Far from disputing any longer for the trifles of time and sense, they would joyfully renounce them all, in expectation of an eternal inheritance: and instead of running to the frivolous amusements of the world for a momentary recreation, every passing day would appear too short for the exhilarating duties of praise and thanksgiving.

It is asserted by many, that this *divine hope* is usually

preached by every minister. That preachers in general, are accustomed to exhort their hearers, in a cold and languid manner, to hope in divine mercy, will readily be granted : but that such do not publish the *real, evangelical hope* of christians, may be easily proved beyond the possibility of a doubt. We have seen, in the preceding sections, that the minister of the present day is unacquainted with this hope : that he is even without any just ideas of that true repentance, and that living faith, from which alone this hope can flow : and hence, it is impossible for him in the nature of things, to publish it in the church of God. In vain has Christ himself declared, that the *broad way* will conduct multitudes to destruction, and that *except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God* ; in spite of these solemn declarations, the worldly pastor still imagines, that this very way will conduct him to life, and that he shall be counted among the inhabitants of that Kingdom, without scriptural regeneration. He supposes, at least, that he is sufficiently sanctified, though his righteousness exceeds not that of the pharisees, nor his devotion that of the Laodicean church. Thus, entertaining a *vain hope* in his own heart, and indulging a confidence, which is repugnant to the concurrent testimonies of every sacred writer, he necessarily leads his hearers into the same dangerous delusions.

As in order *solidly* to found our hopes upon a benefactor, or a surety, it is necessary to have an acquaintance with the person, who presents himself in either of these characters ; so the *lively hope* of which we speak, must flow from an experimental knowledge of God, by Jesus Christ : *This is eternal life, that they may know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* But the children of this world, whether they be laymen or ecclesiastics, are without this knowledge. They know neither the Father nor the Son : and were it otherwise, the love of the world would not have dominion over them.

This *lively hope* can never dwell in an unregenerate heart. The child, that is not born, cannot possibly rejoice in hope of possessing the heritage of his father ; since he is equally unacquainted with his parent, and the patrimony, that is likely to be reserved for him. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary to be born of God, before we can exercise this *exhilarating hope*. Now a man is thus born when he is re-

generated by that spirit of adoption, which God hath promised to those, who sincerely believe in Jesus Christ. But they, who are conformable to the maxims of the world, are not able to receive this vivifying spirit. *I will pray the Father, said Christ to his disciples, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but, being already regenerate in part, ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you, when you are fully born of the Spirit.* It is not, till after the accomplishment of this promise has been experienced, that the following expressions, can be perfectly understood—*Know ye not, that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost? now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.*

Far from preaching this *primitive hope*, the worldly minister is alarmed at the bare mention of it. Let it here be observed again, that this celestial plant can flourish only in those hearts, where the word of God, sharper than any two-edged sword, has cut down every unfruitful appearance of pharisaical hope. Now when a true minister is engaged in performing this painful operation, cutting away the mortified members of the old man, and plucking from pride its unprofitable supports; the inexperienced minister preposterously takes offence at his holy zeal, and censures this necessary severity, as leading souls into the horrors of despair. Slow of understanding in spiritual concerns, he comprehends not, that they who recline themselves upon a broken reed, must give up all the confidence they foolishly place in so slender a prop, before they can effectually choose the Rock of ages for their support.

The true character of these false Apostles is not generally known. Covering their impiety with the cloak of religion, they are supposed by many to act on the part of Christ, and are frequently esteemed as pillars in the church. But there are occasions, on which they unwittingly throw off the mask, and make an open discovery of their secret thoughts. Some few persons are found in the world, who, refusing to attend card assemblies, rejoice to be present in those less polite assemblies, which are formed for the purpose of prayer. Here it is usual for consenting neighbours to take sweet counsel together, and wrestle with ardour for the *hope* of the Gospel,

in words like these :—" Gracious Father ! forgive the sins
 " of thy returning children, and grant us an increase of spiritual
 " strength. Sensible of our own unworthiness, assist us to
 " place all our confidence in thine unbounded mercy, mani-
 " fested through Jesus Christ. Increase our faith in the
 " Son of thy love, and confirm our hope in thine unchange-
 " able promises. O thou divine Saviour ! descend this day
 " into our hearts as thou didst once descend upon thy first
 " disciples. Consecrate us thy living temples, fill us with
 " thy graces, and, during the time of our earthly pilgrimage,
 " vouchsafe to lead us with the right hand of thy power.
 " Let not thy spirit of illumination and holiness, thy spirit
 " of consolation and joy, abandon us for a moment, as we pass
 " through this valley of tears. May its potent operations
 " subdue in us the power of sin, and produce in our outward
 " conversation the happy fruits of righteousness, peace and
 " joy. Permit us at this time, to return to our houses, with
 " a consciousness of thy love, and an assurance of thy favour :
 " and grant that, after having been the temples of thy Spirit
 " upon earth, we may one day be received into the temple
 " of thine eternal glory in the Heavens."

A worldly minister, on a certain time, entering into an assembly of this kind, heard the prayer of these humble believers ; and as much surprized to see the ardour with which they offered their petitions, as to observe the time and place in which they were presented, withdrew from their society, with as much indignation, as a good pastor would retire from a company of jugglers. But having understood that one of his own parishioners was of the religious party, he took the earliest opportunity of testifying the utmost disapprobation of his conduct. ' What was it,' said he, ' that you was doing
 ' with those people the other day, in such a place ? Conven-
 ' ticles of that kind are contrary to order, and unworthy of
 ' toleration. The Church is the only proper place for the
 ' performance of divine worship : moreover, I heard you
 ' foolishly praying for, I know not what consolation, light
 ' and power, of the Holy Spirit. Receive in good part the
 ' advice I offer you—Look upon inspirations and illumina-
 ' tions of this sort, as no other than the idle fancies of
 ' visionaries and enthusiasts : renounce the imaginary assurance,
 ' with which you do but deceive yourself, and repose upon
 ' the hope which I have constantly preached to you ; a *hope*,

‘with which you and your neighbours may very well rest contented.’ Confounded with a discourse of this kind, a weak and inexperienced christian might have been drawn aside from the narrow path of truth. But the person here alluded to, by citing Eph. i. 17, 18. was enabled to prove, that the very same illumination and power, which were treated so contemptuously by his opponent, were nevertheless absolutely necessary, as the ground-work of a *solid hope*. Nay, he pushed the matter still further; and asserted, that the prayer against which the zealous pastor had so angrily exclaimed, was used in exact conformity to those very petitions, which he himself was inconsistently heard to offer at the feast of Pentecost, and at other solemn seasons.

If this little relation faithfully describes the manner of thinking, which is too common among the clergy of the day, is it not evident, that they are more disposed to ridicule, than to preach, the *christian hope*; and abundantly more earnest to obstruct, than assist their parishioners, in the pursuit of everlasting blessedness?

When the dawn of this glorious hope first began to glimmer: when, at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole company of the disciples began to praise God with a loud voice, strewing the way by which their Lord was to pass, with garments and branches of trees, and crying out before him *Hosanna to the Son of David: blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!* Some of the pharisees, who had mixed among the multitude, rudely exclaimed; *Master, rebuke thy disciples.* And when he was entered unto the temple, *the chief priests and scribes* [those models by which the generality of ministers seem anxious to form themselves] seeing *the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying Hosanna, were sore displeased, and said unto him, hearest thou what these say;* And Jesus answered them, *Yea; have ye never read, out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise? I tell you, that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.* Their still exists the same opposition betwixt those, who cordially embrace the Gospel, and those, who ungratefully reject it. As often as the former are perceived to give a loose to the transports of their gratitude, rejoicing in *hope* of the glory of God, the worldly minister, displeased to observe any thing that appears to reproach his own lukewarmness, is prepared

to counteract the motions of that joyful hope, which he deems no better than the confidence of presumptuous fanatics. But the minister, who imitates St. Paul, on observing such a scene, will cry out with that great Apostle : *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in HOPE through the power of the Holy Ghost.*

If penitents are not pointed to the blessedness of this hope, they will strive like Cain, to stifle their remorse by passionately abandoning themselves to the business and enjoyments of the present world : or, like the Israelites, who found not sufficient pleasure in religion to banish the recollection of Egypt's vanities, they will indulge that spirit of trifling which the Apostle thus describes—*The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.* On the contrary, when the christian is directed to the *hope* of his high calling, he finds it a source of unutterable consolation : and having discovered the treasure hidden in the Gospel field, *for joy therefore he selleth his all*, in order to purchase that field. He now renounces, without pain, what before had hindered him in running the heavenly race, counting nothing dear to himself, that he may finish his course with joy, and insure the crown of everlasting life. So powerfully were the first christians supported by this *Gospel hope*, that they remained immoveable amidst the forest calamities of life, and suffered death itself with a courage that astonished their persecutors. But when they lost their confidence, like Demas, they began to indulge the fond hopes and foolish fears of the present world, becoming altogether weak as other men : and such are the generality of christians at this day. The love of many is waxing cold, while the church of God is evidently falling into ruins : and how shall we assist to rekindle that love, or repair that church, but by zealously proclaiming abroad the *hope of the Gospel.*

THE TRUE MINISTER PREACHES CHRISTIAN CHARITY.

IF the evangelical pastor proclaims *repentance, faith, and hope*, it is with a view of leading sinners to that *christian charity*, which is justly esteemed the crown of every grace. In preaching *repentance*, he lays the axe to the root of every corrupt tree. In preaching *faith*, he plants the tree of life. When he preaches *hope*, he causes that tree to put forth a beautiful blossom: but when he preaches *charity*, he calls forth the rich fruit from every vigorous branch. And while he is engaged in performing the various parts of this important work, he denounces the anathemas of the Gospel, against that *repentance, faith, and hope*, which are *superficial, unfruitful, and delusive*.

The minister of the day piques himself upon preaching morality, which he is ordinarily accustomed to do, in the manner of an Heathen philosopher. Unacquainted with the importance and power of the doctrines of christianity, he is ashamed to walk in the traces of St. Paul. If he is enabled to paint with any degree of ability, the serpents of envy, the inquietudes of avarice, and the delights of charity, he imagines that he shall readily dispose his neighbours to love as brethren. He knows not, that *the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus* is that alone, which can make any man *free from the law of sin and death*, by delivering him from that envy, that avarice, that ambition, that indifference, and those worldly fears, which are incompatible with evangelical charity. ‘What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, i. e. our degenerate nature,’ which has need of stronger motives and more powerful supports than those, which the law proposes, ‘God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:’ *that* by the new motives and the divine assistance offered in the Gospel, ‘the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who,’ being regenerate, ‘walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.’

The judicious pastor, observing the same connection be-

tween the morals and doctrines of christianity, as between the root and fruit of a vigorous tree, is constrained incessantly to preach those important truths, which naturally give rise to the three above mentioned graces: and he is perfectly assured, that wherever these truths are permitted to take root, he shall shortly rejoice over the inestimable fruits of christian charity. This mode of acting is equally conformable to reason and revelation. By publishing those doctrines, upon which the necessity of repentance is founded, he exterminates pride and inordinate self-love, which are the greatest obstacles to charity. By preaching the doctrines of faith, he gives rise to that universal love, which extends to God and man. Thus when a sinner sincerely believes, that *God is love*: when penetrated with admiration and gratitude, he can say with the Apostle, *I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me*: at that moment, he necessarily feels a degree of affection toward the creating Father, and the redeeming Son, whom he longs to imitate, and whom he rejoices to obey. This love is as boundless as it is ardent, and reaches to the most unworthy of his fellow creatures, enabling him, according to the example of Christ, to sacrifice for his very enemies, not only outward comforts, but even life itself. Hence the christian faith is said to work by *love*. Now if this lively persuasion of the unspeakable blessings, which God hath already given us in Christ Jesus, is sufficient to produce a good degree of charity; it is evident, that a well-grounded hope of greater blessings still to come, must serve to strengthen and increase this charity. And if we are fully persuaded, that our labours of love shall never be forgotten; that even a cup of cold water, imparted for the love of Christ, shall not go unrewarded; what influence may not such an hope be expected to have, in opening the heart to universal benevolence, and in producing all the fruits of evangelical charity?

Convinced, that to plead for charity, without insisting upon the doctrines, by which it must be supported, would be building a house without laying a solid foundation, the true minister industriously labours to explain the nature, to exhibit the motives, and represent the effects of this wondrous grace, in the clearest manner. To some, indeed, such discourses are vain; but others among his hearers are found, who, ravished with the loveliness of this virtue, and constrained by

those motives which the Gospel proposes, betake themselves to the exercise of it, with as much ardour, as the voluptuous run to their sensual entertainments.

Darkness differs not more from light, than the charity of the faithful minister differs from that of a scribe ill-instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom. The love of the good pastor *rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth*, which frequently comes to humble human pride. On the contrary, the charity which every false Apostle preaches, is no more than the phantom of a virtue, consoling the heart in the midst of sin, rejoicing *in a lie*, and resting upon assurances altogether contrary to the word of God. To be charitable, according to the notions of these men, is to indulge a persuasion, that there is much to be abated of the threatenings contained in the Gospel, and that St. Paul is far beside the truth, when he declares, that *no unclean or covetous person hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ*. It is to believe, that the Holy Spirit was too severe, when it dictated to St. James, that *he who is a friend of the world, is the enemy of God*, and violates his baptismal vow in as full a sense, as adulterers violate the sacred vow of conjugal fidelity. It is to insinuate, that Christ himself overpassed the bounds of reason when he publicly cried out, ‘Whosoever shall say to his brother, thou fool, shall be in danger of Hell-fire.’ Judge not, saith the Redeemer, *that ye be not judged*. But, according to the sentiments of these erring guides, to be divinely charitable, is to conclude from this precept, that a man may even revoke the judgments of Christ himself: thus, under pretext of not judging those, who are evidently walking in the road to perdition, they indirectly give judgment against the Redeemer, as bearing a false testimony. In errors like these it is, that the world will needs have the greatest part of charity to consist.

The true minister attacks this false grace, as an enemy to the truths of the Gospel, while he pleads for that Christ-like charity, which may properly be called the sister of truth. He asserts the dignity and power of truth; holding it up to the veneration and love of those, who would not wilfully offend the God of truth. Let us, continues he, ‘speaking the truth in love, grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:’ and having first *purified our souls in obeying the truth*, let us *love one another with a pure heart fer-*

ently. Between these scriptural companions he will suffer no separation to take place ; and when they are treated by the injudicious, as enthusiastic and heretical, he will dare to stand forth in defence of these two confederate virtues.

Another opinion, that generally prevails among the professors of christianity, is, that charity consists in giving alms to the poor : and this opinion is earnestly contended for by many, although the pharisees, who were regarded by our Lord as *serpents and vipers*, through their want of unfeigned charity, were yet remarkable for their generosity in almsgiving. St. Paul manifestly opposes this erroneous notion, where he declares, that it is possible for a man to *give all his goods to feed the poor*, and yet be destitute of charity. The faithful pastor, it is true, maintains, that every charitable person is constrained to assist the poor, according to his ability : but he adds, that alms-giving is as uncertain a mark of charity, as a constant attendance upon the sacramental table, is an equivocal evidence of faith : since it is as possible to relieve the poor through weakness or vanity, as to receive the holy communion through timidity or custom.

If the charity of worldly men is ever found to exceed this description, yet it will always be limited to the necessities of the body. As they know not, how far the immortal spirit is superior to the perishing body, which must soon be blended with the dust of a thousand carcases, it is no wonder, that their chief concern is engrossed by the latter. The welfare of their own souls is attended to with a very small degree of solicitude ; and while this is the case, it cannot be imagined, that they should manifest any extraordinary degree of affection towards the souls of their neighbours. They behold without sorrow those deluded partizans, who make war upon each other for the sake of their particular errors : they can even gaze, without pity on those obdurate souls, who are desperately plunging from one abyss of sin to another. How different were the feelings of David, when, like a true penitent, he not only wept for his own offences, but shed torrents of tears for those, who transgressed the law of God. And how contrary was the character of St. Paul, who went through a kind of spiritual travail, till the degenerate were born again. In like manner the primitive christians exposed themselves to imminent dangers, that they might give proofs of the most exalted charity, by snatching souls from sin and death. And

when they were not able to effect this by their external labours, they then wrestled in their closets, with sacred prayers and tears, for the conversion of the ungodly. Where there is no desire after the salvation of others, there *true charity* is unknown : for while a man disregards the soul of his neighbour, all the interest he takes in his temporal affairs, can manifest no more than the charity of a disciple of Epicurus, which is as far below the charity of Christ's disciples, as materialism is inferior to christianity.

In opposition to all the false ideas, which have been received upon this subject, the minister of the new Testament teaches, that charity is the image of God ; and that *eternal and infinite charity*, is nothing less than God himself. One Apostle declares that *God is love* ; and another assures us, that we are called to be made *partakers of the divine nature* : whence the sacred preacher infers, that the *new creature*, of which St. Paul makes mention, must necessarily consist in *charity*. When a christian is filled with *charity*, he is then regenerate and born of God. Christ is then formed in his heart, the Holy spirit rests upon him, and he is *filled with all the fulness of God*. He keeps the first commandment of the law, by making a full surrender of his heart to God, from a consciousness that he is in himself the *sovereign good* : but he chiefly loves him in the person of Christ, through whom the Father is pleased peculiarly to shine forth, as a God of love. In a secondary sense, he loves the works of God in all their wonderful variety, as they shadow forth his matchless perfections, and place them within the reach of man's understanding. And his esteem for his admirable productions, is in proportion to the nearer or more distant relation, in which they stand to that eternal wisdom, which formed them all. Guided by this principle, he loves all mankind with an extraordinary degree of affection. The soul of man is peculiarly dear to him, because created in the image of God, and redeemed with the blood of his beloved Son : while as the organized vehicle of the soul, he admires and loves the perishable body. As the souls of the poor and the rich are equally immortal, he is never meanly prejudiced in favour of the latter ; but, on the contrary, is ever ready to prefer a poor and pious beggar, before a sensual and supercilious noble. Thus the true christian cherishes the faithful, not only for the love of the Creator, and Redeemer, but also for love of the

sanctifying Spirit, unto whom their souls are consecrated as living altars, and their bodies as hallowed temples. From this divine charity good works of every kind proceed, as from an inexhaustible fountain; a fountain which is making, as it were, continual efforts to enrich the barren soil around it. But where this is wanting, all external appearances are without any real value: the lavish giver, loses his worth before pious men, and the zealous martyr his reward before a righteous God.

Uniting in his own heart the love of God, with the love of his neighbour, the true minister anxiously endeavours to demonstrate the folly of those, who seek to separate these important duties. He maintains, that charity without piety is but a mere natural virtue, which discovers itself as frequently in the brute creation, as among unregenerate men. The swallow and the bat are careful of their young—the beaver and the ant are observed to labour for the respective societies of which they are individuals, and the she-bear is ready to meet death in defence of her cubs. On this account, the good pastor furnishes his flock with those exalted motives to christian love which, by giving a divine principle to natural charity, ennobles it in man, and renders it divine.

As charity, without piety, is no more than a natural virtue, and may be the effect of pharisaical or diabolical pride, so devotion, without brotherly love, is to be considered as a species of hypocrisy, as our Lord himself teaches in the following passage. ‘If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift,’ which would otherwise be rejected, as an abomination by the God of love. True charity embraces all men, because being made of one blood, they compose but one vast family, of which God himself is the great parent. And here our Lord permits us not to except even our most cruel enemy. *Ye have heard*, saith he, ‘that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them, that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and,’ manifesting a concern for their souls, as well as an attention to their persons, ‘pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may

be the children of your Father, which is in Heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good.

Charity consists of two parts, *patience* and *benevolence*. By the one, we suffer every kind of indignity, without entertaining a thought of revenge; and by the other, we heap upon our enemies unsolicited favours. Our adorable Master, whose conduct has furnished us with examples of the most perfect charity, discovers to us the extent of this virtue, in the following passages. The world hath *hated both me and my Father*; nevertheless, ‘God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. It hath been said an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth;’ and the time is coming, when it shall be said, a thrust with a sword for an abusive word; a pistol shot for a satyrical expression: *but I say unto you, resist not*, according to the maxims of those, by whom you are evil-entreated; ‘but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also:’ i. e. suffer two insults rather than revenge one. Follow the same rule likewise with respect to your worldly substance, ‘and if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also:’ i. e. far from exacting with rigour, be ready to remit much of thy right, for the maintenance of peace: since it is better to suffer a double injustice, than to lack condescension and charity. ‘And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain:’ i. e. merely yielding to others in things, that are good, or indifferent, is not enough; thy charity should rather prevent and surprize them with unexpected acts of civility and kindness. From these expressions it appears, that our Lord would have his disciples to possess a charity not only extraordinary in some degree, but altogether divine. In point of quality, he requires, that it should be equal to the inexpressible love of the Father; as a drop taken from the ocean is of the same nature with those mighty waves, that roll over the unfathomable deep. *If ye love them*, saith he, ‘that love you, what reward have you? do not even the publicans so? Be ye, therefore, perfect’ in charity, ‘even as your Father, which is in Heaven is perfect.’

Faith, unspeakably excellent as it is, would be void of any real worth, unless it produced this happy disposition. *In Christ*, saith the Apostle, *the whole body* of the faithful, ‘fit-

ly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in LOVE. In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith, which worketh by LOVE: and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not CHARITY, I am nothing.' This celestial grace runs through the whole circle of christian virtues. Thus when St. Paul enumerates the fruits or effects of the Spirit, he points to *charity* as the foremost of the train: and when St. Peter recounts the virtues which a christian should add to his faith, he concludes with the finishing graces of *brotherly kindness and charity*. Both these ideas are afterwards united by the great Apostle, where he exhorts the Colossians *to put on charity as that bond of perfectness*, without which the christian character would be incomplete, and which may be said to include all the graces of the Spirit, as a thousand ears of corn are united in the same sheaf by one common band.

It was with these sublime views of charity, that St. Paul thus addressed his converts, *By LOVE 'serve one another; for all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another, for he that loveth another,' in obedience to Christ's command, hath fulfilled the law. CHARITY never faileth; inasmuch as it is the source of heavenly joy. Now, in the church militant, 'abideth faith, hope and charity; but the greatest of these is' CHARITY, which shall eternally animate the church triumphant.*

Even here on earth, it is counted as the beginning of *eternal life*, to know, by faith, that *God is love*, and that he seeks to gain our affections by blessings without number. A discovery of this kind cannot but give rise to some grateful return in the soul; since it is impossible firmly to believe these ravishing truths, without crying out, like the first christians, *We love him, because he first loved us*. If GOD has mercifully made the first advances toward his rebellious creatures; if, notwithstanding the distance between him and us be infinite, and the obstacles to our union innumerable, he yet graciously presents himself in spite of all; if he yet inclines to pardon the guilty, and endeavours to reconcile the world unto himself by Jesus Christ; what conscious heart can be

unaffected with these tokens of his love, or what tongue be silent in his praise ?

This God of charity thus affectionately addresses an ancient class of his servants ; ‘ I have loved thee with an everlasting love : therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee.’ The favour which he here expresses toward the Jewish church, is great ; but that, which he testifies to the christian church, is still more astonishing. His Son, the living and eternal image of his father, humbles himself to the dust, and invests himself with our nature, that raising us from our low estate, he may, at length, place us at the right hand of the Majesty on high. *He loved the church*, saith St. Paul, ‘ and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, and that he might present it to himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.’ Thus he has given to believers an example of the love, which they ought to entertain for all their christian brethren, and to husbands a pattern of the attachment they should feel to their wives ; since he left the bosom of his Father, for the very purpose of suffering with, and for his church, which in the language of scripture is called his spouse. But, adds the Apostle, *this is a great mystery*. Now the true minister is happily initiated into this grand mystery of charity. He can say, with Peter, *Lord ! thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee* : he can testify, with Paul, *the love of Christ constraineth me* : and, at other times, when the emotions of his heart are too tender for utterance, tears of gratitude and joy, silently cry out, like those of dissolving Mary, Lord thou art worthy of all my love, since thou hast graciously pardoned all my sin. Animated with this love, he publicly insists upon *universal charity*, with all the ardour of St. John, testifying that it flows from the knowledge of God, and must be considered as the root of christian obedience. *Hereby*, saith he, ‘ perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us : and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue ;’ *but*, according to the example of Christ, *in deed and in truth* : for, *if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another*. And remember, *he that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is LOVE*.

Although Christ evidently came to break down the wall of separation between the Jews and Gentiles, by preaching

the doctrine of *universal charity*; yet he willed, that believers should love one another with a peculiar degree of affection. We are required to meet the unregenerate with a love of benevolence: but believers should be bound to each other by ties so tender and powerful, that the world may acknowledge them to be men of one heart and one soul. *By this, saith our Lord, shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.* And who can describe the generosity, the sweetness, the strength, and the constancy, of this enlivening grace? It is more active than the penetrating flame; it is stronger than death. *The communion of saints*, is received among christians as a sentence in their established creed: happy would it be, did it constitute a part of their religious experience! As to the difference betwixt *christian charity*, and that which was required under the law, it seems to be satisfactorily pointed out by St. John, in the following passage: *Brethren I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment, which ye had from the beginning*; for Moses himself earnestly exhorted his people to maintain among themselves the fire of fraternal love. *Again, a new commandment, I write unto you*; new, in relation to Christ, who hath loved us not only *as himself*, but even *more than himself*; since he offered up his life a ransom for the rebellious. Moses tasted not of death for Pharaoh, as Jesus did for Pilate, Herod, and Caiaphas. The christian legislator alone requires a charity of this perfectly disinterested nature; and for the support of so exalted a precept, he has seconded it with his own great example. *Herein is love*, continues the Apostle, *not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* Love, then, is undoubtedly of God; flowing from him, as from an inexhaustible spring; and he that loveth, after the same pure and fervent manner, is born of God, and knoweth God.

This charity is set forth by St. Paul, as a source of consolation. *If, saith he to the Phillippians, there be any comfort in LOVE, be ye like-minded, having the same love one to another*: and, ‘let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.’ And in another epistle, he cries out; ‘I have a great conflict for them at Laodicea, that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in LOVE.’

1. Charity may be considered as a spring of comfort, because it frees us from the fear of death, and delivers us from

a thousand other terrors, which trouble the peace of worldly men. *There is no fear in LOVE ; but perfect LOVE, hoping all things casteth out fear : because fear hath torment. He, therefore, that feareth, is not made perfect in LOVE.*

2. Charity is consoling, because it assists and encourages us in the discharge of our several duties. When we glow with affection to God and our neighbour, works of piety and charity are performed, not only without pain, but with heart-felt sensations of secret delight. *This is the love of God that we keep his commandments : and to those who sincerely love him, his commandments are not grievous.* Thus a tender mother, loses her repose, without repining, that she may attend to the wants of her restless infant : thus, an affectionate father labours with pleasure, for the support and education of his children ; and thus, with every testimony of joy, the primitive christians relieved and supported one another. The admirable effects, produced by this unfeigned love, are described by St. Luke in the following terms : ‘ The multitude of them that believed, were of one heart and one soul ; neither said any of them, that aught of the things which he possessed, was his own :’ *but, losing sight of every self-interested view, they had all things common.*

Here we behold *that* eminently accomplished by Christ, which was anciently prefigured under Moses in the desert, when the manna was so equally distributed among the people, that *he who gathered much, had nothing over, and he who gathered little, had no lack.* Happy were these fleeting days of christian fellowship ! Days that had long been promised by God, and of which a foretaste had been given in the land of Canaan, when it was ordained that, during the year of jubilee, the poor should be permitted to share the comforts of their richer neighbours. It must be allowed that a multitude of insincere professors over-spreading the church in these melancholy times, will not permit this method to be generally adopted among us, which would, nevertheless, be entirely practicable in a country inhabited by the affectionate followers of Jesus. But, at the same time, it is no less true, that every individual, who is possessed of real charity, is still treading in the steps of his elder brethren, and waiting only the return of favourable times to prove, that *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever ; and that unfeigned*

charity, in the same circumstances, will ever produce the same effects.

It is impossible too highly to exalt this charity, which springs from a grateful sense of the redemption that is in Jesus. He, who is unacquainted with this grace, is a stranger to every real virtue, and utterly destitute of that *holiness without which no man shall see the Lord*. Hence we find the Apostle Paul so frequently connecting *holiness* with *love*; or rather pressing the latter, as that in which the former may be said principally to consist. *God*, saith he, 'hath chosen us in Christ, that we should be holy and without blame before him in LOVE. Let Christ dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in LOVE, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. The Lord make you to increase and abound in LOVE one toward another, and toward all men: to the end that he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God.'

Knowledge alone puffeth up, but charity, added to knowledge, *edifieth*, and conducts the soul, from grace to grace, *unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*. Happy they, who have attained to this high degree of spirituality, from which, with a look of pure beneficence, they can smile on all around them! Such may join the first professors of christianity, and say; *We have known and believed the love, that God hath to us*; and, penetrated with a deep sense of his affection, we declare from happy experience, that *God is LOVE*; and *he that dwelleth in LOVE, dwelleth in God, and God in him*. The love of these persevering disciples may, in a scriptural sense, be termed *perfect*; since it enables them to bear a just, though faint resemblance to the God of love. Their hearts are as replete with charity, as sparks are filled with fire: and doubtless the smallest spark may be said to shine, with a degree of perfection, in its little sphere, as well as the brighter sun in his more boundless course.

St. Paul, who preached this charity with so much fervency, declares, that it was kindled in his heart by the love of Christ; and upon this account he labours to found it upon those doctrines, which are universally despised by every class of deists. In his epistle to the Romans, which contains

sixteen chapters, he employs eleven in laying this solid foundation, while the duties of charity are declared only in the five remaining chapters. Like a wise master-builder, before he attempts to raise this sacred edifice, he endeavours to remove out of the way the ruins of corrupted nature, and the rubbish of self-love. But had he endeavoured to do this, without calling in to his aid the doctrines of the Gospel, he would have acted as ridiculously as Archimedes, had that philosopher attempted the removal of earth, without having first secured a solid footing suited to his purpose.

The most powerful motives employed by this Apostle, in urging us to the practice of christian charity, are the *love* of God, and the *compassion* of Christ. God, saith he, 'commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us: and, ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be rich.' Now, whoever is sensible of the power, and tastes the sweetness, of these two grand truths, feels himself, at the same time, carried to every good work, in the same manner as the miser is led to those actions, which serve to increase his hoard. For, *being saved by grace, through faith*, in these very truths, *we are created by Christ Jesus unto good works. Who gave himself for us*, on this sole account, 'that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' The consolatory doctrine of a gratuitous pardon offered to sinners, as a token of God's unfathomable love, is another motive frequently made use of to the like purpose. *Put on*, continues the same Apostle, 'as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.' Yes, it not only covers the sins of others, by considering their doubtful actions in the most favourable point of view, and by overlooking the most unpardonable of their failings; but may in some measure, be said to cover our own offences, since God, for Christ's sake, has promised to overlook our transgressions as we give proof of a forgiving temper toward our brethren. Discord entered into the world by *sin*.

Hence we see unregenerate men not only separated from God, but divided among themselves : and hence, by the rebellion of his growing passions against his enfeebled reason, every unrighteous man is at war with himself. Dreadful as these evils are, we are here presented with a perfect remedy for them all. He, who created man upright, hath sent his Son to re-establish harmony in the world, to reduce our passions under the government of love, to subject our reason to the authority of truth, and to subdue the whole man under the sweet yoke of charity manifested in the flesh ; *that charity*, which is destined to reign for ever, and whose happy empire is called the *Kingdom of Heaven*. *The Father of glory*, says St. Paul, ‘ hath put all things under the feet of Christ, and hath given him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him, that filleth all in all. Ye, who sometimes were far off, are now made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace,’ between Jews and Gentiles, between man and man, ‘ who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us, that he might reconcile both unto God in one body, by the cross, having slain the enmity’ by that perfect charity, of which he gave so many wonderful proofs. *Now, therefore*, we who are actuated by the same spirit of love, ‘ are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God ; and are built upon the same foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. In whom the whole building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord : In whom also ye are builded together for an habitation of God, through the spirit of CHARITY.’

The minister, who feels the force of this overcoming motive, cannot fail to place it continually before his hearers. The various parts of his public discourses as naturally incline to this grand point, as the several parts of a solid edifice mutually rest upon the common foundation. *There is one body*, saith he with the Apostle, ‘ and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling ; one Lord, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. As we have many members in one body ; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Let love be, therefore, without

diffimulation: be kindly-affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another. Rejoice with them that do rejoice; and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath. If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink. Be not overcome of evil; but overcome evil with good.' In a word, *Let all your things be done with CHARITY.*

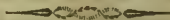
To conclude. The evangelical pastor points out the excellence of *charity*, and urges every motive that can lead to the practice of it, till worldly men are constrained to cry out, with all the admiration of the ancient heathens; "See how "these christians love one another!" Lucian, indeed, could look with ridicule upon the zeal, with which the primitive christians succoured one another: "For," says he, "their "legislator has made them believe, that they are all brethren; and hence they have all things common among "them, despising even death itself, through the hope of immortality." The good pastor, however, is anxious to do that, which this heathen writer was impious enough to censure in Christ. He admonishes believers to address the Almighty, as their common parent, conscious, that so soon as they receive power to cry *Abba*, i. e. *Father*, by the Holy Spirit, they will necessarily forget every scrupulous distinction between *mine* and *thine*, and put up, with unfeigned sincerity that universal prayer, *give us this day our daily bread.* This petition is commonly used by every member of our degenerate church, while their hearts are comparatively insensible to the wants of their necessitous brethren. But was the love of ancient days to revive among us, we should not only solicit common blessings from above, but rejoice to share them with each other, as brethren partake of a repast provided for them at the table of their common Parent.

Happy days! when the Gospel of Christ was seen to flourish in the earth. Surely that sacred season might, with propriety, be termed the golden age of the church. O that we could recall the felicity we have forfeited, and see the joys of unanimity restored to a distracted world! But, while we give vent to our lamentations, let us not sink into despair, since however deplorable our present circumstances may be, they are not totally remediless. Though for so many ages, *self-love* has usurped the throne of *charity*: though mankind

are prone to injure one another, in their reputation, by slander; in their property by injustice; and in their persons by murder, whether perpetrated in the character of an assassin, or that of a duellist; though wars are fomented on the slightest pretences, and christian princes appear eager to wash their hands in the blood of thousands; though *all the earth is full of darkness and cruel habitations*: yet will we not give up our hope. These unhappy times were foretold by our gracious Master. And as he had prescience enough to predict the decays of *christian love*, and the calamities consequent thereupon; so he is possessed of sufficient power to re-establish the empire of *charity* in the world. Believers, then, amidst all their afflictions, may patiently and confidently expect those *times of refreshing*, which *shall assuredly come from the presence of the Lord*: looking forward to that promised *restitution of all things*, concerning which, *God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy Prophets since the world began*. In the mean while, let those who are hastening, by their prayers, this desirable revolution, be careful to preserve in their own hearts those sparks of charity, which shall one day kindle the universe into a sacred flame. And let the ministers of the Gospel make a constant display of those evangelical truths, which were formerly sufficient to light up this glorious fire; that by stirring up the dying embers of grace, the little light, which still remains in the church, may be preserved from total extinction.

Should it be here objected—Are not all the ministers of our church to be considered, as preachers of *christian charity*? We answer, by no means. The charity, concerning which we speak, must flow from a union with Christ; a union, which ministers of the present day, are accustomed to treat as enthusiastic and vain. This excellent *grace is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us*. But he, who dares openly to plead for this scriptural truth, is esteemed by such preachers, no better than a deluded fanatic. These preachers are frequently heard, indeed, to speak of christian charity, but far from endeavouring to spread it through the world, they use every effort to destroy the very seeds of this grace in the church of God. If, in a parish that is unhappy enough to have a pastor of this kind, a few persons are happily converted to God, and united together in Jesus Christ; if, having one heart, and one soul, they fre-

quently join together in prayer and in praise, mutually exhorting and provoking one another to love and good works;—the worldly minister, instantly alarmed, imagines that these persons, for the sake of forming a new sect, are destroying the unity of the church: when, on the contrary, they are but just about to experience *the communion of saints*. And, if he is possessed of zeal, or party-spirit, he will labour to make it appear, that these christians, who are beginning to love as brethren, are forming conventicles to disturb the order both of church and state. Such a minister will give encouragement to companies of jugglers, dancers, and drunkards, rather than tolerate a society, which has *christian charity* for its object and its basis.



THE TRUE MINISTER BELIEVES AND
PREACHES THE THREE GRAND PROMISES
OF GOD, TOGETHER WITH THE THREE
GREAT DISPENSATIONS OF GRACE.

WE have seen, in the preceding chapters, that believers are saved by a faith and an hope, which serve to feed in their souls the sacred fire of charity. Now, this faith, and this hope, must necessarily have for their foundation some promise of God. A promise already accomplished is embraced by faith alone; but a promise, whose accomplishment is protracted, is equally the object of faith and of hope. He, therefore, who is appointed by Christ a preacher of the everlasting Gospel, is solicitous to obtain clear ideas of the great promises of God. He is constantly engaged in meditating, either upon their past or future accomplishment, in order to maintain in his own heart those inestimable graces, with which he is desirous to animate the souls of others. Observe the method, in which he considers, embraces, and preaches them.

Under the dispensation of the Father, the grand promise was that, which respected the external manifestation of the Son. The original promise, as made to Adam, was expressed in the following terms: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." As the Messiah was to descend from Abraham, according to the flesh, the same

promise was thus renewed to that Patriarch: *In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.* In the days of Moses, it was repeated to all Israel, as follows: *The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet, from the midst of thee, of thy brethren; unto him shall ye hearken.* David and the other Prophets powerfully confirmed this prophecy, and Malachi thus recapitulates the promises which had been given before his time: ‘The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts. Unto you, that fear my name, shall the Son of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth,’ out of your present obscure dispensation *and grow up*, in spiritual strength, *as calves of the stall.* Thus speaks the last of the prophets, under the dispensation of the Father.

Immediately upon the accomplishment of these promises, while the dispensation of the Son was but darkly opened by his precursor, another promise was given for the exercise of faith and hope, under this new economy, respecting the full manifestation of the Holy Ghost, as a Spirit of truth and love. Behold this grand promise, as announced by John the baptist. *I am not the Christ; I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord. I baptize you with water unto repentance*, as a preparation for the spiritual kingdom and baptism of the Messiah: *but he that cometh after me, is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear.* He shall introduce a more spiritual dispensation, and administer a more efficacious baptism: *for he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire*, shedding abroad those gifts and graces of his Spirit, which shall penetrate and purify your hearts, as metals are penetrated and purified by material fire. This promise is of so great importance, that it was thought necessary to be repeated by the four Evangelists.

Our Lord, continuing the dispensation, which his forerunner had opened, *made and baptised more disciples than John, though Jesus himself baptised not, with water, but his disciples.* The baptism, which he was about to administer, was as far superior to the baptism of John, and that of his own disciples, as the water, of which he spake to the woman of Samaria, was superior to the water of Jordan, or that of Jacob’s well. *Whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him*, said he

to that enquiring woman ; whosoever shall come to my baptism, and let down his vessel into the inexhaustible fountain of my grace, *shall never thirst : but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, a source of righteousness, peace, and joy, springing up into everlasting life.*

In order to strengthen the hope of those, who had been baptized with water, our Lord publicly ratified the promise, which had been so frequently repeated to them by John the Baptist. ‘ In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried ; If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this he spake of the Spirit, which they that believe on him,’ *in every age*, should receive. ‘ For the Holy Ghost was not yet *fully* given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.’ An inestimable promise this, which deserves to be deeply engraven in the minds of those, who are merely acquainted with Christ, according to his exterior appearance in the world. Observe here the method, by which he endeavours to prepare all such in every country, and in every period, for his manifestation in the Spirit : *If you love me keep my commandments*, be faithful to the present dispensation of my Gospel, *and I will pray the Father and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.* *At that day*, when ye shall experience the fulness of his presence, ‘ Ye shall know, that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. For he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him.’ By comparing these words with the seventeenth and twenty-sixth verses of the same chapter, it is evident, that by this spiritual manifestation of the Father and the Son, nothing less can be intended than the full measure of that Holy Spirit, *which proceedeth from the Father*, and which is expressly called, *the Spirit of his Son*.

Our Lord, who knew the stupidity of those who were under the inferior dispensation of his Gospel, and how *slow of heart* they were *to believe*, what either the Prophets or himself had spoken, judged it expedient to repeat the grand promise of the Spirit again and again. ‘ When the Comforter is come,’ said he, ‘ whom I will send unto you from the Father, he shall testify of me. It is expedient for you, that I go away : for if I go not away, the Comforter will not

come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. Behold I send the promise of my Father upon you.'

The abundant effusion of the Holy Spirit was termed by our Lord, the promise of the Father, for two reasons ; first, because coming to instruct mankind how to worship the Father *in spirit and in truth*, it became him to refer all things to that Father : and this he was strictly and constantly accustomed to do. Secondly, because *the father of lights* is to be considered as the author of *every good and perfect gift*. It was he, who so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son to die for the world ; and from him proceeds that Holy Spirit, which Jesus Christ still continues to shed abroad among his faithful followers. The Father had already promised under the law, that he would grant unto his people a general out-pouring of his Spirit, under the reign of the Messiah. The memorable prophecy of Joel, as quoted by St. Peter, is generally known ; and the following promises equally merit the attention of believers. ' In that day, I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and supplications : and they shall look upon me, whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son. I will pour water upon him, that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground : I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring. I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean. I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes. I will give them one heart : I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh.' That man must be prejudiced to an extreme degree, who perceives not, that these gracious prophecies began to receive their accomplishment upon the day of Pentecost, when the multitude of them that believed were *of one heart and one soul*.

The last day our risen Saviour passed upon earth, was employed in strengthening the faith of his disciples, with respect to this promise. After having them together, *he commanded them to wait for the promise of the Father, which continued he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptised with water, and ye have done the same, by my direction, but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.*

After the grand promise under the dispensation of the Son was in part accomplished ; when the disciples were fil-

led with faith, and with the Holy Ghost, another promise was given to exercise their faith, to fix their attention, and to perfect their patience; the promise of Christ's second coming to 'gather his wheat into the garner, and to burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. This same Jesus,' said the Angels who appeared to the disciples on the day of their master's ascension; 'This same Jesus which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen him go into Heaven.' This important promise was afterwards repeated by St. Paul and the other Apostles. 'The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that obey not the Gospel; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe. Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. The day of the Lord^s will come, as a thief in the night.'

This coming of Christ, which is disregarded by many, for the reason assigned by St. Peter. is so fully expected by those who live under the dispensation of the Spirit, that they are constantly *looking for, and hastening to, the coming of the day of God*. According to St. Paul, sinners are converted from the error of their ways, that they may 'serve the living and the true God, and wait for his Son from Heaven, whom he raised from the dead: looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.' This second coming of Christ was the object of this Apostle's highest hopes, after which he represents himself as *groaning* with the most fervent desire. *Yea I count all things but loss*, continues he, 'that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection. Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is even able to subdue all things unto himself.'

As God had afforded believers, under the old Testament, a perspective view both of the manifestation of the Redeemer in a mortal body, and that dispensation of the Spirit, which he was to open among his followers under the new Testament, so he had likewise foretold, by his Prophets, the

glorious return of that Saviour to the earth. ‘The Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints to execute judgment. Behold, he shall come saith the Lord of Hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand, when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap.’

Mark the terms, in which our Lord himself declared this sublime dispensation. ‘The love of many shall wax cold. False prophets shall arise, and ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by the Prophet Daniel, stand in the holy place. Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the powers of the Heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in Heaven: then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of Heaven, with power and great glory. But of that day and hour knoweth no man. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.’ Thus Jesus himself testified of his second coming, and his first disciples, in conformity to their Master’s declaration, addressed a large assembly in the following terms, almost immediately after his ascension: ‘Repent ye, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus, which before was preached unto you: whom the Heaven must receive, until the time of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy Prophets, since the world began.’

So long as a minister embraces these different promises: so long as, with a lively faith which is *the evidence of things not seen*, he believes, that the Father sent his Son for the redemption of sinners, and his Holy Spirit for the sanctification of believers—so long as, with a faith which is *the substance of things hoped for*, he believes, that Christ shall one day return for the glorification of his saints; so long he is saved by that *faith and hope*, which enable him to preach the Gospel in all its wondrous extent. So long, he not only comprehends, but experiences the power of that Gospel in his own soul, while he labours to make it manifest before the world, by his public discourses, and by the whole tenor of his conduct.

THE TRUE MINISTER STUDIES THE DIFFERENT DISPENSATIONS, IN ORDER TO QUALIFY HIMSELF FOR THE DISCHARGE OF EVERY PART OF HIS DUTY.

THE pastor, who is ill-instructed in the mysteries of our holy religion, loses himself and leads his sheep astray. The good pastor, on the contrary, having found out the way to everlasting life, presses forward therein at the head of his flock, and exhorts every heedless wanderer to follow his steps. He is conscious not only, that he has a mixture of sheep and goats in his fold; but he knows that, among the former, there are some, to whose spiritual condition the sincere milk of the word is much better adapted, than stronger food. To all of these he studies to address himself in a suitable manner. To those who are dead in trespasses and sin, equally destitute both of love and fear, he proclaims the first principles of the Gospel, such as *repentance from dead works, faith toward God, and an eternal judgment*. Those who are already awakened from the delusions of sin, he anxiously leads into the paths of grace; and endeavours to conduct those to evangelical perfection, who have felt the *powers of the world to come*. He easily distinguishes the mixed multitude of his hearers into a variety of classes. The unbelieving and impenitent, who are to be considered as without God and without hope in the world, are such as go on, without any symptom of fear, toward the gulph of perdition; whether it be by the high-road of vice, with the notoriously abandoned, or through the by-path of hypocrisy, with pharisaical professors. Converted sinners, or believers, are either under the dispensation of the Father, under that of the Son, or under that of the Holy Ghost, according to the different progress they have made in spiritual things: and the faithful pastor is as perfectly acquainted with their various attainments, as a diligent tutor is acquainted with the different abilities of his several pupils.

Believers, under the dispensation of the Father, are ordinarily surrounded with a night of uncertainty and doubt, though visited, at times, with a few scattered rays of hope. Under the dispensation of the Son, the doubts of believers are

dissipated, like those of the two disciples who journeyed to Emmaus, while they discover more clearly, and experience more powerfully, the truths of the Gospel. But under the dispensation of the Spirit, they *walk in the light*, and are led *into all truth by the Spirit of truth*; the anointing which they have received, abideth in them, and teacheth them of all things necessary to salvation.

A father of the church paraphrasing upon those words of the Apostle, *Lord save us; we perish*—apostrophizes thus with the doubting disciples: ‘You have your Saviour with you, what danger can you fear? We are yet, they reply, but children, and have attained but to a small degree of strength: hence we are afraid. The descent of the Holy Spirit, that divine protector, which has been graciously promised, has not yet filled us with full assurance. This has been the cause of our unsteadiness hitherto: and hence, the Saviour so frequently reproaches us with the weakness of our faith.’ Now, all those christians, who have not yet received the spiritual baptism, so frequently mentioned in the new Testament, are shut up in this state of weakness and doubt. But so soon as they are born of the Spirit, they cry out no longer with trembling fear, *save us; we perish!* but they cry out in transports of gratitude, ‘God, according to his mercy, hath saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he hath shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour!’

Under the dispensation of the Father, believers constantly experience the fear of God, and, in general, a much greater degree of *fear* than *love*. Under the economy of the Son, *love* begins to gain the ascendancy over *fear*. But under the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, *perfect love casteth out fear*; because it is peculiarly the office of the Comforter, to deliver the soul from every thing that is liable to distress and torment it.

Under the economy of the Father, the believer is frequently heard to exclaim, *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Under that of the Son, he gratefully cries out; *I thank God*, who hath effectually wrought this deliverance, *through Jesus Christ our Lord*: but under the perfect Gospel, which is the dispensation of the Spirit, all believers are enabled to say, with one voice; ‘We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but

we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father! The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God, and joint heirs with Christ.'

St. Paul thus distinguishes the different states of advancement in the christian faith. *The heir, as long as he is a child*, [and such is the case with believers, under the dispensation of the Father] 'differeth nothing from a servant, though he be Lord of all; but is under tutors and governors till the time appointed of his Father. Even so we were *once* in a state of bondage: but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of Sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore, thou art no more a servant but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God, through Christ: by whom we have access into this grace, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.'

Our Lord himself evidently pointed out the progressive state of the church, when turning to his disciples, he said; 'Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things, which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things, which ye hear, and have not heard them.' Nevertheless, when their gracious Master held this language, he was at that time neither glorified, nor crucified: and it is well known, that the great glory of the Gospel was to follow his sufferings and his triumph.

The same subject is treated by St. Peter in his first epistle, where he speaks of that full *salvation*, which is to be considered, as the end or recompense of *faith*. *Of which salvation*, saith he, 'the Prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ, which was in them did signify, when it testified before-hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you, by them that have preached the Gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven, which things the Angels desire to look into. Happy are ye! for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you. Ye are a chosen

generation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises of him, who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.'

Without an experimental knowledge of these several states, a minister can no more lead sinners to evangelical perfection, than an illiterate peasant can communicate sufficient intelligence to his rustic companions, to pass an examination for the highest degree in a university.

It may here be necessary to mark out the grand truths, by which these dispensations are severally characterized.

The common language under the dispensation of the Father, is as follows: 'God hath made of one blood all nations of men, and hath appointed the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he be not far from every one of us. The grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared, *in different degrees*, to all men; For the living God is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe. God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. Without faith, it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh unto God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.'

Observe the language of the Son's dispensation. 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men. I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people: for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. The hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. Ye believe in God, believe also in me. If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent—No man can come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me draw him: and every man, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. He that believeth on the Son, hath ever-

lasting life : and he, that believeth not the Son, shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him.’

The dispensation of the Spirit is again distinguished by the following peculiar language. *This is that which was spoken by the Prophet Joel : In the last days, or under the last dispensations of my grace, ‘saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, upon my servants and upon my hand-maidens : and they shall prophesy. Jesus, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, hath shed forth this plenitude of grace, the effects of which ye now see and hear. Repent, therefore, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*

If at any time it is to be apprehended, that believers are still carnal, and unrenewed by the Spirit of God, the pastor, who is conversant with these different economies of grace, enquire with St. Paul ; *Have ye received the Holy Ghost, since ye believed ?* When others, among his flock, demonstrate both by their conversation and conduct, that they are influenced by the Spirit of Christ, he exhorts them in a manner suitable to the glorious dispensation under which they live. ‘Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost : therefore glorify God, in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s. Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Be filled with the Spirit ; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, making melody in your hearts unto the Lord. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks.’

This language is too elevated for natural men, who understand it no more than illiterate persons comprehend the most abstruse parts of science. Hence it is necessary, that the faithful minister should acquaint himself with the different conditions and capacities of all his hearers, if he would happily accommodate spiritual things to spiritual men. Without this knowledge, he will, under every dispensation, run the hazard of refusing to advanced christians the solid nourish-

ment they need, and of presenting to the natural man that celestial manna, which his very soul abhors.

THE DIFFERENT DISPENSATIONS ARE PRODUCED BY THAT LOVELY VARIETY, WITH WHICH THE ALMIGHTY IS PLEASED TO DISTRIBUTE HIS FAVOURS.

IF the light of the Gospel had been due from God to every individual sinner; if he had not been left entirely free in every sense of the word, to impart it to whom, at what time, and in what degree soever was most pleasing to himself; his impartial justice would then have engaged him equally to illuminate all mankind, and he must have caused the Sun of righteousness, immediately after the fall, to have shone out in its meridian brightness. In such case, there would have been but one dispensation of grace; and the light of the Gospel would not have proceeded to its highest glory, by such just gradations, as are observable in all the productions of nature.

But the Almighty has proceeded in the work of our redemption, according to the dictates of his own unerring wisdom, and not upon the plans of our pretended sages. The day of the Gospel, whether it be considered as enlightening the world in general, or the heart in particular, rises, like the natural day, from one degree of brightness to another, till all its glories are fully manifested.

The confusion which many divines have spread over this part of theology, makes it necessary to go into particulars, that we may place in a just point of view, both the gradations and the harmony of those three dispensations, which collectively form the glorious Gospel of God.

If some naturalists were determined to confine their observations upon the rainbow, to those lines in it that are manifestly red; if naturalists of another class were as obstinate in contemplating those of an orange hue; and if others were as resolutely bent in singling out those of a blue colour; they would contradict and dispute with each other in as ridiculous a manner, as many ignorant worshippers of the triune God are observed to do at this day. Thus deists dispute for the

honour of God the Creator; and while some christians pay all their homage to God the Redeemer, others are as wholly taken up with God the Sanctifier. Amid' all the confusion of these jarring sentiments, the prudent pastor admits, in their proper place, the various dispensations of Evangelical light, conducting his followers from faith to faith, till he beholds them illuminated with all the truths, and experiencing all the power of the christian religion.

We acknowledge that God is just, though the light of the natural sun approaches us only in a gradual manner, producing a constant variety both in our days and seasons. We do not accuse the supreme Being of injustice, because he is not pleased to bring the fruits of the earth, in an instant to their highest maturity; or because the same species of fruit, which is esteemed for its delicious flavour in one climate, is found worthless and insipid in another. And if the Sovereign of the world is not expected to ripen on a sudden, either the reason of individuals, or the knowledge of nations, it should not be matter of surprize to observe him acting in his usual manner, with respect to things of a spiritual nature. His plans are all equally wise: but it is impossible for man to form a perfect judgment of them, unless the *creature* could stand for a moment in the place of the CREATOR, and take one comprehensive view of earth and heaven, time and eternity. If, *one day is with Lord as a thousand years*, when he is pleased in an unexpected manner, to fulfil his grand designs: *and a thousand years as one day*, when he sees good to accomplish his purposes in a more gradual way; why should it so strangely afflict and amaze us, that he has left the human race in a state of suspense, with regard to his unsearchable counsels, for near six thousand years? The time is coming when he will discover to us that stupendous plan, which, in our present circumstances, we contemplate with every disadvantage; and just as an animalcule, whose life is limited to six hours, would contemplate the plan of an immense palace, which a skilful architect had promised to complete in as many years. Supposing such an insect endued with reason, and coming into existence during the night, should blindly crawl among the loose materials of which the intended edifice was to be constructed; what opinion could it form either of the architect, or his plan? Would not this insignificant creature be led to judge of these matters, as the pretended philosopher

inconsiderately judges of that mysterious plan, upon which the Almighty is erecting the temple of truth, and creating an incorruptible world? If the Creator thought it necessary to employ six days in completing the beauties of the material world; and if the Redeemer judges it expedient, progressively to perfect the more lasting beauties of a spiritual world, during six of his more ample days; how little reason have we to despise the comprehensive design; especially, when we consider six thousand years are far more inconsiderable in comparison of eternity, than six atoms in comparison with this terrestrial globe?

Now, if such a plan is not only reasonable, but has been evidently adopted by him, who *giveth not account of any of his matters*, it is undoubtedly true, that those who have lived indifferent periods of time, have not been permitted to enjoy all the various truths, which God has successively revealed to man. Nevertheless, it is equally certain, that every man, in what period of time, and in what peculiar circumstances soever he found himself placed, has received sufficient light to discover, as well as sufficient power to perform, what God has been pleased to require at his hands.

The day of evangelical truth is graciously allowed to all mankind, that they may thereby be assisted to discover, to love, and to obey their celestial Parent: and, finally that they may reach the mark of their high destination, which is the enjoyment of those different degrees of blessedness, which are reserved for the different classes of the faithful. Let us consider the morning of this sacred day. When the first man had extinguished in his heart the light of truth and the fire of charity: when he became sufficiently stupid to think of concealing himself from his God among the trees of the garden, and sufficiently impious to throw the blame of his offence upon his companion in transgression, instead of confessing his disobedience with all its aggravations: it is evident, that man was then without Christ, i. e. without a Saviour, without *hope, and without God in the world*. In that night of error, of confusion, and, probably, of despair, the promise of a powerful Redeemer was given to our first parents, whence certain beams of hope were produced, which formed the earliest twilight of the Gospel-day.

The tradition of this gracious promise, which was made to Adam and confirmed to Noah; the natural law, which is

nothing less than the remains of the Creator's image in the human heart ; and the secret grace of the Redeemer, which is more or less operative in every man ; these collectively formed that evangelical dawn, which was for a long time universally experienced in the world, and which may, with propriety, be termed, either gentilism, the religion of the first patriarchs, the Gospel of the heathen, or the dispensation of the Father. In this low dispensation, and under these faint glimmerings of truth, the generality of mankind are still unhappily observed to live. And though clouds of prejudice, together with vain tradition, deprive pagan nations, in part, of this inestimable light, yet sufficient remains among them, for the direction of those, who are seeking after the light of a less obscure dispensation.

When mankind had become almost universally unfaithful to the grace of gentilism, and unmindful of the past vengeance of God in destroying the world ; when they had plunged themselves into the most impious excesses, and were wholly given up to the grossest idolatry : at that time, the Almighty resolved to separate from the corrupted nations, a single people, who should preserve among them the divine worship in its purity ; a people, among whom the Messiah should be born, and who should spread around them, both the expectation and the promise of so wonderful a Deliverer. Moses, Aaron, and Joshua, were the representatives of this extraordinary person. Moses, as a Prophet and Legislator ; Aaron, as an High-priest appointed of God ; and Joshua, as an illustrious conqueror, dividing the Kingdoms of Canaan among those, who had followed him through the dangers of a tedious warfare. Thus the Jews became a preaching people to the rest of the world, preserving in it the light of the Father's dispensation, and preparing it for the further dispensation of the Son : inasmuch, that the expectation of a divine Restorer was spread over many parts of the earth, as we learn from two pagan historians, whose testimony deserves credit. Nay, the Sybils, and even Virgil himself took occasion from this general expectation, of applying to Augustus the predictions of a sublime conqueror, who was to issue from the east, renewing the face of things.

Judaism then seems to have been nothing more than the dispensation of the Father, though undoubtedly more luminous than it had formerly appeared before the calling of Abra-

ham. The moral Law given by Moses, was but a new edition of the natural Law, which had been given before, and the ceremonial Law was added thereto, as a further confirmation of the original promise. This was, however, a remarkable advance toward the dispensation of the Son and that of the Holy Ghost, since the mysteries of both were shadowed forth by the interior parts of the temple, by sacrifices, by ablutions, by anointings, by perfumes, by burning lamps, and sacred fires.

The universal creed under this ancient dispensation still forms a part of that, which is received among christians: and there is no true worshipper under this economy, but who can say, with sincerity; ‘*I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Creator and Preserver of heaven and earth, the avenger of sin, and the rewarder of those who faithfully serve him: and I trust the time is coming, when some divine instructor will enable me more fully to know and obey this incomprehensible Father of the universe.*’ May such an instructor soon appear, was the united prayer of Socrates and Plato. ‘Let him hasten his coming,’ says the true Jew and pious theist, ‘under whatever appellation he may choose to appear.’ ‘Let him be called the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, or the Son of David; let his name be, the Messiah, the Son of God, the Logos, Emanuel, Joshua, Jesus, Saviour; or only, the Prophet, the Angel of the covenant, or the messenger of God; it is of little consequence: if he brings but life and immortality to light, I will receive him with gratitude and joy.’ Such is the faith, by which those Jews, Mahometans, and Pagans, whose hearts are principled with humility, candour and the fear of God, have been, and still continue to be saved in every part of the world. For the Father of mercies, who knoweth whereof we are made, will no more *absolutely* condemn such worshippers, on account of the extraordinary respect they have discovered for Moses, Mahomet, and Confucius, than he will finally reject some pious christians, for the sake of that excessive veneration, which they manifest for particular saints and reformers; nor will he punish either, because their guides have mingled prejudice with truth, and legendary fables with the doctrines of theology.

As a prudent physician proportions his medicines to the different ages and habits of his patients, so the enlightened

pastor, who feels himself concerned for the spiritual health of his flock, sees it necessary to act with equal care and discretion. He preaches the dispensation of the Son to those, who like Socrates and Plato, are longing for a divine instructor, as well as to those, who, like Simeon, Nicodemus, and Cornelius, are waiting for the consolation of Israel. He leads them, either from the Law of Moses, or from the Law of nature, to the Gospel of Christ; explaining, with precision, those parts of the new Testament, which exhibit the commencement of the Son's dispensation, together with all he taught, performed, and suffered, while he continued upon earth.

Lastly, to such as have devoutly embraced this part of the Gospel, he publishes the glorious economy of the Holy Spirit which was not fully opened till after the bodily appearance of the Redeemer was withdrawn from the world. Then it was that he descended in the fulness of the Spirit, directing and supporting his disciples, animating and sanctifying his members, and manifesting that Kingdom of God, that dispensation of *righteousness, peace and joy*, which is so largely treated of in the acts and epistles of the Apostles.

These three dispensations have one common end. They mutually tend to manifest the different perfections of the Supreme Being, to raise man from his present low estate, and to perfect his nature. This threefold design is apparent under the dispensation of the Father; it unfolds itself more clearly under that of the Son; and shines out with encreasing lustre under that of the Holy Spirit. As it is one and the same Sun, that animates every thing in the natural world, so it is one and the same God, that operates every thing in the kingdom of grace. He, whom we address as our HEAVENLY FATHER, in that sacred form of prayer which is common among christians, is the *very God*, in whose name the ancient Patriarchs were accustomed to bless their children. The *WORD*, through which we address him, is no other than that *light of the world*, by which the antediluvian fathers were illuminated in their several generations; and the Holy Ghost, by which the souls of the faithful are divinely regenerated, is the same Spirit, that primarily *moved upon the face of the waters*; of which also it was said, in the days of Noah, *My Spirit shall not always strive with man*.

There never was a time, in which the Son and the Spirit

were not occupied in completing the salvation of believers. But there was a time, when the Son became manifest upon the earth, making a visible display of his astonishing labours: and then it was, that his particular dispensation had its commencement. So likewise there was a time, when the Holy Ghost, more abundantly shed forth by the Father and the Son, began to work his mysterious operations in a more sensible manner: and at that time commenced the particular dispensation of the Spirit, which serves to perfect the dispensation of the Son, as that of the Son was given to perfect the dispensation of the Father.

These distinctions are founded upon reason, upon revelation, and upon the Apostles' creed.

1. Reason suggests, that mankind must for ever remain under the sovereignty of their omnipotent Creator, and accountable to him, for the use they make of his innumerable favours. Reason further discovers, that, if man should admit the darkness of error into his understanding, and the fatal influence of sin into his will, he cannot possibly recover his pristine state, except by the manifestation of a new light, and the exertions of a stronger influence. But who shall produce the former, except that Saviour, who is *the light of the world*? Or, who shall supply the latter, except that energetic Spirit, which *helpeth our infirmities*.

2. These distinctions are founded upon revelation. The volume of truth informs us, that the Creator foretold the coming of a Redeemer, and that the Redeemer, during his outward manifestation, proclaimed the near approach of *another comforter*. It is undoubtedly true, that some earnest of redeeming grace, together with the first fruits of the Spirit, were experienced even by the most ancient inhabitants of the earth. It is true also, that, by means of those earnest and first fruits, many myriads of mankind have been saved in every age of the world. But it is no less true, that the plenitude of these sacred gifts was reserved to a very distant period of time; since, after the first promise of a Redeemer was given, near four thousand years elapsed before he made his public appearance: and while he continued upon earth, it is expressly said, that *the Holy Ghost was not yet given*, in its full measure; *because that Jesus was not yet glorified*.

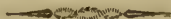
3. Christians are taught to distinguish these different degrees of evangelical grace, and to rejoice in all the advantages

of these three dispensations, when they are solemnly baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And this they publicly profess to do so often as they repeat the three principal articles of the Apostles' creed. Happy would it be, if through the *demonstration* of that HOLY SPIRIT, in which they affect to believe, they were enabled experimentally to confess their ALMIGHTY FATHER and his REDEEMING SON. Every one of them might then thankfully add, I experience the *communion of saints*, and *the forgiveness of sins*: I joyfully and confidently expect, *the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting*.

It is presumed, that no doctrines can come more strongly recommended to the consideration of professing christians, than those which are undeniably founded upon reason and revelation, upon that outward form of baptism, and that primitive creed, which are universally received in the christian world.

The attentive reader will easily perceive, that the difference between these several dispensations, is formed by those different degrees in which the Redeemer is manifested. Under gentilism and Judaism, or under the general and particular dispensations of the Father, the Redeemer is both announced and expected: he is announced by the Father's original promises, by tradition, by types, by prophecies; and he is expected as a Saviour, who shall, sooner or later, make his appearance. Under the baptism of John, and under that imperfect christianity which is received by a baptism of water, the Redeemer is apprehended, in some measure, by sense; or by a faith which merely respects the history of the Gospel: but he is only apprehended, as a Saviour manifested in the flesh, to accomplish the external act of redemption. It is otherwise, under that perfect christianity, to which we are introduced by the mysterious baptism of the Spirit, in which the Redeemer is manifested after a manner abundantly more glorious. He is now received as coming in the Spirit, after having died for our sins and risen again for our justification. Now he performs the spiritual work of redemption in the soul, delivering his people from the power of sin by communicating to them the special efficacy of his death, his resurrection, and his triumph. Henceforth, he is a *comforter*, not only *with*, but *in* us; where he spiritually exercises his

acknowledged offices, instructing, purifying, and, finally, subduing all things to himself.



THE DIFFERENT PREACHERS UNDER THESE DIFFERENT DISPENSATIONS.

PERSUADED, that confusion is the source of a thousand errors, the prudent minister endeavours to place the truths of the Gospel in their proper order : and reflecting upon those preachers who have formerly proclaimed them, he is enabled to produce something upon their separate testimonies, which may serve to edify the different classes of his hearers. Thus St. Paul, when preaching to the Athenians, judged it convenient to cite one of their own poets, rather than Moses : and thus, in addressing those teachers, who leave the Gospel in order to set up a vain philosophy, the true minister may find it necessary to produce the description which Epictetus has given of a real philosopher.

Every dispensation has had its peculiar preachers, and the pastor who is led into all truth, is anxious to second these preachers, by publishing, in their proper place, those sacred truths which they have respectively delivered, according to their different proportions of grace.

The preachers under the dispensation of the Father, are

1. *The works of creation.* *The heavens, saith David, declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work. That which may be known of God, adds St. Paul, is manifest, even among the heathen.* ‘For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead ; so that they are without excuse ; because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God.’

2. *Providence.* *The living God, saith the Apostle, ‘who, in times past, suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, left himself not without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from Heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.’*

3. Those dreadful *scourges*, with which an avenging God is constrained to correct a rebellious world. Such as *famine, pestilence, war, &c.*

4. *Reason* : which is a ray from that divine word, that eternal logos, that *true light, which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world.*

5. *Conscience.* For the Gentiles, saith St. Paul, *which have not the law written by Prophets and Apostles, are a law unto themselves ; their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts accusing, or else excusing one another.*

6. Enoch, Noah, and all the holy patriarchs who lived before the flood.

7. All those pious persons, who have inculcated the fear of God, and published the traditionary promise which was given to our first parents.

8. The prophets and priests among the the Jews, together with the sacred poets and true philosophers among the ancient heathens.

9. Those priests, who, among Jews, Mahometans, and modern Pagans, recommend, with sincerity, holiness and the fear of God.

And lastly, all those preachers of Christendom, who, blind to the dispensations of the Son and the Spirit, fall back into gentilism, delivering only such moral essays, as have been abundantly exceeded by philosophers of old.

As this dispensation has ever had, and still continues to have, its celebrated preachers ; so it has frequently had, and may yet continue to have, its confessors and martyrs. If it was possible to come at the history of all those, who have been eminently distinguished by their piety under this economy, and who have nobly suffered in the cause of godliness, we might probably discover many an Abel, and many a Zacharias, many an Aristides, and many a Socrates, in every nation under Heaven. In company with these amiable and honourable characters, the evangelical pastor is constantly observed, so far as they proceed in the high-way of truth : but he advances far beyond them, when he would associate with the preachers of the Son's dispensation.

The heralds of truth, under this dispensation, are

1. The priest Zecharias, who announced the accomplishment of the promise which was made to the patriarchs.

2. The Angel, who first brought down the tidings of the Messiah's birth, in company with the multitude of the heavenly host, who attended him upon that extraordinary occasion.

3. Those Jewish priests, who directed the magi from Jerusalem to the city, in which Christ was born.

4. Those celestial voices, which declared, upon mount Tabor, and on the banks of Jordan, that Jesus Christ was the beloved Son of the Father.

5. John the baptist, who proclaimed Christ come in the flesh, and endeavoured to prepare the penitent for the dispensation of the Spirit.

6. Those seventy disciples, who were commissioned by our Lord to preach the Gospel.

And, lastly ; all those teachers of the present day, who, like Apollos in the beginning of his ministry, perceive nothing beyond that inferior dispensation, of which an outward baptism is considered as the seal.

Under the dispensation of the Spirit, the preachers, are

1. The Apostles, who entered upon their excellent ministry, after being first miraculously endued with power from on high.

2. All those ministers of the Gospel, who, after receiving into their own hearts *the spirit of adoption*, proclaim the coming of that Spirit to those, who have already experienced *repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*. Such ministers alone may be said to proclaim the spiritual Kingdom of God : and those alone can experimentally direct believers to the absolute fulfilment of every Gospel promise. The teachers of this day, instead of proclaiming the grand promise of Christianity, unhappily renounce that promise ; imagining, that it merely respected the first followers of Jesus, or, at most, that it was confined to the earliest ages of the christian church. Far from publishing the Gospel in its abundant plentitude, these unskilful evangelists are not able to preach all that imperfect Gospel, which in scripture language is called, *the baptism of John*. John publicly announced the baptism of the Holy Ghost : and far from despising such baptism himself, he openly declared, that he had *need to be baptized of Christ*. Nevertheless, John was put to death before the promise of the Father was fully accomplished : and on this account our Lord declared, that the least in *the kingdom of Heaven*, i. e. the lowest under the dispensation of the Spirit, should be accounted *greater than he*. Yea, even the soldiers of Cornelius, after the Spirit had descended upon them, were assisted to publish the mysteries of that king-

dom with greater clearness, and with a more lively conviction, than the fore-runner of Jesus had ever done.

That prophet doubted before his death, as well as all the Apostles before the day of Pentecost. But under the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, the great truths of the Gospel are demonstrated by the power of an internal evidence, which leaves in the heart no more room for doubt, than a mathematical demonstration leaves room for hesitation in the mind. Further—John the Baptist barely intimated the necessity of a spiritual baptism: but the most illiterate among the centurion's servants could say: Christ hath baptized me with the Holy Ghost and with fire; and the promise, which he hath already fulfilled to me, who am a poor Gentile, he will as gloriously accomplish in favour of others, since *the promise is given to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.* Thus, under this sublime dispensation, every faithful servant of the Lord is enabled to prophecy out of the fulness of his heart, and to speak the wonderful works of God. Thus also, every zealous minister, persevering in his pursuit after evangelical truth, becomes, at length, of the same society with those, that were the first and most effectual preachers of the everlasting Gospel.



**THE DISPENSATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
IS NOW IN FORCE, AND THE MINISTER
WHO PREACHES THIS DISPENSATION,
CANNOT JUSTLY BE ESTEEMED AN EN-
THUSIAST.**

TO reject the Son of God manifested in the Spirit, as worldly christians are universally observed to do, is a crime of equal magnitude with that of the Jew, who rejected Christ manifested in the flesh. Nevertheless, in vain has the Apostle Paul informed us, *that Jesus Christ is a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec; the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.* In vain has John the Baptist declared, *that he shall baptize us with the Holy Ghost and with fire.* In vain, has Christ himself made a gracious offer of this baptism to all nations. In spite of all these declarations, our incredulity still seeks out some plausible reason for rejecting the dispensation of the Spirit.

So long as those perilous times shall continue which were foretold by St. Paul, so long we may expect to behold multitudes of erring professors, who, like the ancient pharisees, not only refuse to enter into the Kingdom of God themselves, but resolutely withstand all those, who are striving to enter in. These faithless christians, resembling the timorous spies of old, are constantly prepared to discourage every persevering Israelite, by raising evil reports of their promised rest. Attached to this present degenerate world, as the wife of Lot was attached to her polluted city, they are ever insinuating, that there is little danger to be apprehended in their present situation: and as for that full dispensation of the Spirit, concerning which so many excellent things are spoken, they confidently assert, that it cannot be expected in the present time, without giving way to the highest presumption and folly. On these accounts, it becomes absolutely necessary, that the true minister should stand prepared to give every man a solid answer, that asketh a reason of the hope that is in him.

That the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit were peculiarly necessary to the Apostles, and that they were actually put in possession of such gifts, we readily allow. But, at the same time, we consider these gifts as entirely distinct from the Spirit itself. When the Spirit of grace takes the full possession of a particular person, he may, if the edification of the church requires it, bestow upon that person some extraordinary gift, in an instantaneous manner: as the prince, who honours any subject with an important commission invests him with sufficient power for the execution of such commission. But the presents of a prince do not always demonstrate his actual presence; since it is very possible for a prince to lodge with one of his subjects, upon whom he has conferred no inestimable favour, while he makes a magnificent present to another, whom he has never condescended to visit in person. Thus the Holy Spirit descended upon Mary the mother of Jesus, together with several other holy women, as well as upon the Apostles, with whom they continued in earnest supplication and prayer: nevertheless, it does not appear, that any one of them received, even the gift of tongues. On the other hand, we are well assured, that many persons, who never received the Spirit of holiness, were yet outward-

ly distinguished by several extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost. The first king of Israel gave rise to that memorable proverb, *Is Saul also among the prophets?* Jonah, though he possessed neither the faith, nor the charity, which are common to many christians of this age, was yet commissioned to visit Nineveh with an extraordinary message from Heaven. And we are informed, that Judas was endued with the power of performing miracles, as Balaam had before been honoured with the gift of prophecy. But, notwithstanding these external appearances we may rest assured, that neither Saul nor Balaam, nor Judas had fully experienced that happy estate, which the meanest among the primitive christians was permitted to enjoy. When, therefore, we assert, that every sincere believer becomes *a temple of the Holy Ghost*: it is not to be understood by such expression, that they have received the power of working miracles; since in this sense, St. Paul himself was not always replenished with the Spirit. But it should rather be understood, that the same Spirit of humility, of zeal, of faith, and of charity, which so eminently dwelt in Christ, continually flows from him to the meanest of his spiritual members, as the sap is known to pass from the trunk of a vine into the least of its branches.

The old and new Testament sufficiently prove, that the special influences of the Spirit are to be universally experienced by the faithful in every age. Isaiah promises this invaluable blessing to those, who are athirst for God. Ezekiel announces the same blessing, in a variety of passages, to all those, who enjoy the privileges of the new covenant. The prophet Joel more directly promises the extraordinary effusion of the Holy Spirit, to *the young and the old among the people of God; to their sons and their daughters, their servants and their hand-maids*. John the Baptist expressly repeats the same promise to all those, who partake of his inferior baptism. Our Lord invites every believer freely to come and receive the long expected blessing. St. Peter unreservedly offers it to the truly penitent; and St. Paul every where declares, that it is the common privilege of christians to *be filled with the Spirit*. Nay, he even intimates, that the name of *christian* should be refused to those, who have not received the promise of the Father. These few passages abundantly testify, how strangely those professors deceive themselves, who confidently affirm that the Holy Spirit was promised to the Apostles alone.

Revelation is no sooner admitted, but reason itself confirms the very truth for which we contend. Why was the Holy Spirit to be poured out in its full measure upon the first followers of Christ? If in order to their sanctification; have we less need of holiness than the Apostles had? If it was to shed abroad in their hearts the love of God; is that love less necessary for us than for them? If to make intercession for them with groanings which cannot be uttered; were the Apostles supposed to stand in greater need of such intercession than all other men? Lastly; if the Holy Ghost was given, that believers might be enabled to cry out—'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, persecution, or death? O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ'—if so; then it should seem, that the Apostles alone were called to suffer and die in a manner so perfectly worthy of christians.

The more we meditate upon the scriptures of truth, the more we shall be convinced, that the experience of real christians, and the reason of natural men, coincide with that sacred volume, in demonstrating, that the grand promise of a Comforter must respect every sincere believer, as well as the first disciples of Jesus. To reject, then, this precious gift, is to trample under foot the pearl of great price, and to despise the Redeemer himself in that spiritual appearance, which is of far greater importance to us than his outward manifestation in Judea. Further; to insinuate among christians, that the promise of Christ's spiritual coming is no longer in force, is to enervate the glorious Gospel of God, and to maintain in his church that detestable lukewarmness, which will ultimately prove the ground of its condemnation. It is to surpass the Jews in their obstinate rejection of our only Lord and Saviour. There was no need, says the incredulous Jew, that the Messiah should suffer and die for our sins: nor is there any need, says the carnal christian, that the Saviour should come in a spiritual manner to reign in my heart. The one destroys the *body*, and the other the *soul*, of christianity: and both are equal strangers to the renovating power of the Gospel.

The true minister, struck with the magnitude of this sin, so general in the present day, incessantly labours for the

restoration of those, who are deeply plunged in so destructive an error.



THE EVANGELICAL PASTOR DEFENDS THE DISPENSATION OF THE SPIRIT AGAINST ALL OPPOSERS.

WHATEVER dispensation of grace the true minister announces, he is constrained, with St. Paul, to brandish his spiritual weapons *on the right hand, and on the left*. If he publishes the dispensation of the Father, he finds it necessary to defend its important truths against the daringly prophane, on the one hand, and on the other, against the vainly superstitious. When he preaches the dispensation of the Son, he has still greater occasion to arm himself on every part, in defence of the doctrine he maintains. On the left hand, he is attacked either by deists, who wholly disclaim all ideas of a Saviour; or by Socinians, who despoil that Saviour of his greatest glory: and on the right, he is assailed by ill-instructed christians, who, under pretence of exalting the Son, look down with contempt upon the dispensation of the Father; not considering, that, by this error, they oppose one principal design of Christ's appearing, which was, that we might worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. But it is chiefly with respect to the third dispensation, that the christian preacher is constrained to wield, without ceasing, that *sword of the Spirit*, and that *shield of faith*, with which St. Paul was so anxious to see every christian armed. As this doctrine is abundantly more elevated than the preceding dispensations, so it stands more exposed to the shafts of innumerable enemies. On the left, it is incessantly attacked by carnal professors, and on the right, by fanatical zealots. These two classes of adversaries, though continually at war with each other, unhappily agree in opposing, either directly or indirectly, the progress of this glorious dispensation, obliging the faithful minister, with equal intrepidity, to combat both.

Observe the grand argument, with which carnal christians carry on this opposition. 'The Comforter,' say they, which was graciously promised to our Lord's first disciples,

was undoubtedly received by those highly-favoured missionaries, and conducted them into all the truths of the Gospel. From this divine Spirit they received continual assistance in spreading that Gospel, and by him they were endued with those miraculous gifts, which served as so many incontestable marks of their sacred mission. But, as christianity is at this time firmly established in the world, the letter of the Holy Scriptures is now abundantly sufficient for every purpose; and there is no longer any necessity for that baptism and illumination of the Spirit, which were evidently requisite among the primitive christians.'

As the mistaken Jews, perfectly satisfied with the law of Moses inscribed upon tables of stone, rejected, with obstinacy, the promised Messiah; so these carnal christians, contented with the letter of the new Testament, perversely reject the *Holy Spirit of promise*. Search the Scriptures; for they testify of me, was our Lord's exhortation to those deluded formalists: and the true minister continues the same exhortation upon those, who blindly oppose the coming of Christ's spiritual Kingdom. He is anxious, with his heavenly Master, to put the matter upon this issue; fully conscious, that they who peruse those sacred pages with an unprejudiced mind, must readily observe, that, instead of superseding the necessity of a spiritual baptism, they give ample testimony, that such baptism is to be considered as a privilege freely offered to the whole multitude of believers.

When christians affirm, that the manifestation of the Spirit is no longer to be sought after, except in that mysterious volume which promises this manifestation to the church; modern Jews might as well declare, that they look for no other manifestation of their Messiah, than that which is to be found in those books of Moses and the Prophets, where the coming of that Messiah is repeatedly promised. But if it be said, the Spirit of Christ was fully given to his first disciples, and that is sufficient for us: this argument has in it as great absurdity, as the following method of reasoning. Moses instructs us, that God created the Sun, and that the patriarchs were happily enlightened by it: but the supreme illumination of that Sun is no longer to be discovered, except in the writings of Moses: and those labourers are downright enthusiasts, who imagine they need any other rays from that luminary, except such as are reflected upon

them from the book of Genesis. The scripture informs us, that God commanded the earth to produce a variety of fruits and plants for the nourishment of its inhabitants; covenanting, on his part, to send refreshing rains and convenient seasons. But, we do not live, exclaims a rational farmer, in the season of miracles, nor am I enthusiastic enough to expect, that rain shall be sent upon the earth. Mention indeed is made, in antient history, of the former and the latter rain; and the books which speak of these fructifying showers, and promise a continuance of them to the latest posterity are undoubtedly authentic: nevertheless, all the rain we can now reasonably expect, must flow from these books alone, and from those speculations, which our reason can make upon the truths they contain. Who will not smile at such a method of reasoning as this.

In those things, which respect our temporal interests, we are not stupid enough to be deluded by such wretched sophisms, though we frequently deceive both ourselves and others, with regard to spiritual things, by arguments no less palpably absurd. God, says the orthodox professor, undoubtedly caused the Sun of righteousness so effectually to shine upon believers, on the day of Pentecost, that they were instantaneously baptized *with the Holy Ghost and with fire*. A celestial shower, at that time, refreshed the church; and the mystic vine matured on a sudden, by the direct rays of so glorious a luminary, was assisted to produce, internally, all the *graces*, and externally, all the *fruits*, of the Spirit. But some extraordinary phenomena, which accompanied that dazzling Sun and those gracious showers, have long ago disappeared. Nay, that Sun itself is totally eclipsed, with respect to us; and the book, which bears testimony to the constant influence of that Sun, and the endless duration of those showers, now absolutely stands in the place of both. Ridiculous divinity! And shall they be called enthusiasts, who oppose such absurdities as these? Then fanaticism may be said to consist in making a rational distinction, between the pearl of great price, and the testament that bequeaths it; between that sacred volume in which the COMFORTER is merely promised, and the actual presence of that COMFORTER in the heart. To pretend, that we have no longer any need of the Spirit of Christ, because we are in possession of an incomparable book, which declares, that *if any man have not*

the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his : is not this to destroy, at once, both the letter and Spirit of the Gospel? And when we see those christians, who profess the utmost respect for revelation, deriding, without fear, the manifestation of that Spirit, by which alone *the love of God* can be *shed abroad in our hearts* : what judgment can we form of such persons, but that they are disposed to treat the Gospel of our glorified Master, as Judas once treated its persecuted author? whatever air of devotion they may assume, while they salute the exterior of it, their secret intention is to betray the very life of the Gospel to derision and infamy. By arguments of this nature it is, that christian ministers are frequently obliged to defend the dispensation of the Spirit, from the outrageous attacks of carnally-minded christians.

But there are times, in which the faithful pastor finds it equally necessary, to defend this part of his doctrine against high and fanatical professors. In every christian country there are not wanting such as have rendered the dispensation of the spirit contemptible, by their ridiculous and impious pretensions. Protestants have blushed for the prophets of Cevennes, and Catholics for the convulsionaries of Paris. In order successfully to oppose the progress of enthusiasm, he publicly contrasts the two different characters of a presumptuous fanatic, and an enlightened christian, in some such terms as follow. The *one* extinguishes the torch of reason, that he may have opportunity to display, in its room, the vain flashes of his own pretended inspirations : the *other* entertains a just respect for reason, following it as the surest guide, so far as it is able to direct him in the search of truth; and whenever he implores a superior light, it is merely to supply the defects of reason. The *one* destroys the clear sense of Scripture language, that a way may be made for his own particular manifestations : the *other* refers every thing to *the Law, and to the Testimony*, fully satisfied, that if high pretenders to sanctity *speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them*. The *former* flatters himself, that while the means are neglected the end may be obtained, presuming that God will illuminate him in a miraculous manner without the help of prayer, study, meditation, sermons, or sacraments : the *latter* unpresumptively expects the succours of grace, in a constant use of the appointed means; and conscious, that *the Holy Scriptures are able to*

make him wise unto salvation, he takes them for the subject of his frequent meditation, the ground of his prayers, and the general rule of his conduct. The *fanatic* imagines himself independent of superior powers both in church and state: the real christian, a constant friend to truth and order, looking upon himself as the servant of all, not only acknowledges the respect due to his superiors, but is ready to give them an account either of his faith or his conduct, with meekness and submission; anxious to have his principles supported by appeals to the reason and conscience of his adversaries, as well as by the testimony of revelation. The *fanatic* pays but little regard to the inestimable grace of charity: like Simon the forcerer, he aspires after the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and, seduced by a vain imagination, forsakes the substance that he may pursue the shadow:—the *true* christian without despising the most inconsiderable spiritual gifts, implores only those, which may assist him in the discharge of his several duties, and peculiarly *that* CHARITY, which is to be ranked as high above the performance of *miracles*, as miracles are to be esteemed above the tricks of jugglers. The *fanatic* conceives himself to be animated by the Spirit of God, when his body is agitated by a rapid motion of the animal spirits, excited by the fallies of an over heated imagination, and augmented by hysterical or hypochondriacal vapours: The *judicious* christian detests this enthusiasm, which, covering religion with a veil of delusion and frenzy, renders it contemptible in the eyes of those, who are ever ready to treat *devotion* as *enthusiasm*.

When the true minister unhappily falls among persons who evidence a disposition to enthusiasm, carrying mortification to an unwarrantable excess, publicly uttering loud and passionate prayers, produced with the most violent efforts; he calls their attention to that beautiful passage in the history of Elijah, where God is represented as manifesting himself, neither in the *wind*, the *earthquake*, nor the *fire*; but in a still small voice. To inspire them with a just horror for this kind of fanaticism, he points them to those contemptible characters whose conduct they are unwittingly copying, and exhorts them to leave the horrible custom of *crying with a loud voice*, together with every other species of religious extravagance, to the superstitious priests of Baal. If it be necessary, he even applies those sarcastic expressions

of Elijah, *cry aloud*, &c. In performing this part of his duty, he is anxious, however, to act with the utmost discretion; not ridiculing the fanatical with an irreverent lightness, but exhorting them with all possible affection and solemnity. It appears from the writings of St. Paul, that enthusiasm had once risen to so great a height in the Corinthian church, that the communion was polluted by the members of that church, and its public ordinances thrown into the utmost disorder. Now, if the Apostle had himself been an enthusiast, he would have seen these disorders without regret; or had he been like the ministers of the present day, he would have rejoiced at the pretext afforded him by the fanatical Corinthians, for turning into ridicule *devotion* and *zeal*, the *power* of prayer and the *gift* of exhortation. But, equally attached both to order and zeal, he wrote to them in the following terms: ‘I would, that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for he that prophesieth edifieth the church. Forasmuch, *then*, as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excell to the edifying of the church. Brethren, be not children in understanding, but men. Ye may all prophecy, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.’ And observe this, that ‘the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets: for God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. If any man think himself to be a Prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge, that the things I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. Let all things be done decently and in order.’ It is by adopting the method of this Apostle, that the good pastor endeavours to root up the tares of enthusiasm, without injuring the invaluable grain of devotion.

Here it may, perhaps, be enquired, if particular manifestations of the Spirit are admitted, how is it possible to shut the door against dangerous illusions? Would it not be wiser entirely to reject the dispensation of the Spirit, while it is confessedly attended with so many difficulties? And would it not make for the happiness of the church, was every member of it to rest contented with having the holy Scriptures explained according to the best rules of reason and criticism? We answer; *By no means*. Bad money, indeed, is frequently put into our hands; but is it necessary, on this account, to obstruct the free course of that which is intrinsi-

cally good ? And would it be reasonable to refuse a sovereign prince the right of coining for the state, lest that coin should be counterfeited or defaced ? As, in society, after warning the public of their danger, we content ourselves with apprehending the man, who attempts to impose on us in this way ; so we may rest fully satisfied with adopting the same mode of conduct, in regard to the church of God.

Let it be here observed, that the operations of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts of believers, are to be distinguished from the effects of enthusiasm in the imagination of visionaries, just as readily as we distinguish health from sickness, wisdom from folly, and truth from falsehood. The believers of Rome could say, ‘ The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. By one spirit are we all baptised,’ *say the Corinthians*, ‘ and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.’ And St. Paul could testify, that many of the Ephesians were *sealed, by the Holy Spirit of God, unto the day of redemption*. They were all enthusiasts, says a modern Doctor, unless they could restore sight to the blind, raise the dead from their graves, and fluently converse in a variety of languages, which they had never taken the trouble to study. No ; insinuates the Apostle : you forget the *essential* for the *accessory*, and found your systems upon false suppositions. *Are all workers of miracles ? Have all the gifts of healing ? Do all speak with tongues ?* There must, then, be some more indubitable method of distinguishing those whose bodies are become temples of the Holy Ghost : and *I shew unto you this more excellent way*. What was meant by this *excellent way*, may be satisfactorily discovered by an attentive perusal of the following chapter, in which the Apostle would have the examination to turn, not upon the gift of prophecy and much less that of languages, but essentially upon all the characters of charity. This was the reasoning of Augustine, as well as of St. Paul, when he made use of the following expression ; “ You then “ speak from the Spirit of God, when you speak from a “ heart glowing with love.” This also was the method, in which Christ himself was accustomed to argue on this point. *Beware*, said he, ‘ of false prophets. Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit. Wherefore, by their fruits ye shall know them. And, the fruit of the Spirit,’ continues St. Paul, ‘ is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness,

goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.' Now fanaticism was never known to bear such fruits as these. On the contrary, it produces divisions, foolish joy, or stupid melancholy, trouble, impatience, fury, vain confidence, arrogance, and excess of different kinds. Nay, it is frequently observed to produce assertions diametrically opposite both to scripture and reason, together with absurd pretensions to new revelations.

It may be asked, in this place, with a shew of reason, if Christ still continues to reveal himself, by his Spirit, to every true believer, are not such manifestations to be considered as so many new revelations? To this we reply that when the Apostle of the Gentiles petitioned for his Ephesian converts, *the spirit of wisdom and revelation*, he was not to be understood as requesting that God would communicate to them a new Gospel; but rather that He would assist them to discover all the glory, and experience all the power, of that inestimable Gospel, which had been already published among them. *Open mine eyes*, said David, *that I may behold wonderful things out of thy Law*. And when God was graciously pleased to answer this prayer of the royal Prophet, He undoubtedly visited him with the illumination of his Holy Spirit. But that Spirit was imparted, not for the purpose of revealing to him a *new* Law, but merely that he might be enabled to fathom the depths of that holy Law, which had been given long before. Thus also christian believers, are constantly offering up their joint supplications, that God would strengthen them *by his Spirit in the inner man*, not for the experience of new revelations, but 'that they may be enabled to comprehend, with all saints, the unfathomable love of Christ; and be filled with all the fulness of God.'

After having defended internal christianity against carnal christians and deluded fanatics, the faithful pastor is obliged, on another part, to resist the attacks of gain-saying philosophers. And this he endeavours to do, by reasoning with them upon this important subject in the following manner.

We consider the Supreme Being, as a divine Sun, whose center is every where, and whose circumference is no where: a Sun, whose light is truth, and whose heat is charity. The truths of christianity we consider as so many beams issuing from this glorious Sun for the illumination of the soul: and as the rays of the natural sun, may be collected and render-

ed more powerful by the interposition of a properly constructed medium, so the rays of this divine Sun are concentrated, and rendered more operative by the humanity of Christ. When any of these rays, passing through the understanding, begin to strike forcibly upon the heart, they melt down its stubbornness, refine its nature, and kindle in it a fire of love to God and man. Further; we believe these changes to be effected in the soul by that secret energy, which is called by many *the inspiration of the Holy Spirit*, by some the *influence of that Spirit*, and by others *the grace of God*.

Is there any absurdity in this doctrine? Can the intellectual world be supposed to merit the Creator's attention, in a less degree than the material world? If the rays of light that incessantly issue from the sun, are supposed to pass through the space of many millions of miles in a single moment, for the illumination and support of the material world; should it appear incredible, that the most speedy and effectual succours may be imparted to holy souls, by that more glorious Sun, which enlightens and vivifies the intellectual world? From the cedar of Lebanon, to the moss that covers its bark, no plant can vegetate; from the astronomer, who measures the heavens, to the animalcule that loses itself in the cup of a violet as in a vast abyss, not a creature can exist, but through the all-pervading influence of the natural sun. Beneath this wonderful star, not a single animal is found, which carries in itself its grand principle of light, heat, and motion. And if all organized bodies depend upon this indescribable luminary for their existence, their increase, and their perfection, may we not reasonably argue from the rules of analogy, that as certainly as there is a spiritual world, so there must be a spiritual Sun, which carries life and light to the inhabitants of that world?

Do you act in a rational manner, continues the true minister, if, because you cannot comprehend how this Sun may be said to act upon spirits, you shut your eyes against his light, and obstinately deny his very existence? Can you comprehend how the material sun, without suffering any decay in himself, is continually darting around him rays sufficient to illumine and cheer revolving worlds? Can you explain, how these rays are impelled, with such amazing velocity, through the immense space, by which that sun is separated from those worlds? Or can you describe the means,

by which they awaken in us the sensation of sight? Moreover, is it not absurd to suppose, that the Almighty is more solicitous, that we should perceive the difference between *white* and *black*, than that we should discover the more important distinctions between *virtue* and *vice*, *truth* and *error*?

If you object, that the material sun is *plainly perceived*, and the power of his beams *universally felt*, by mankind; it may be replied, that he is not always discoverable. Sometimes he is eclipsed; frequently he is enveloped with thick clouds; and at other times his rays glance upon us in so oblique a manner, that their influence is scarcely perceptible: it is possible also to exclude his light by means of curtains or walls, and the cataract effectually opposes his most direct beams. In the moral world there are obstacles of a similar nature, which frequently obstruct the course of celestial light. Clouds of error and vice are constantly rising around us, which, by obscuring the Sun of righteousness, leave room for the incredulous to doubt of his existence. The eye is, in general, so much dazzled with the glare of material objects, that it cannot discover the lustre of a different light. Sometimes, invincible prejudice, like a confirmed cataract, intercepts the strongest rays of truth: and, at other times, we are so closely shut up within the narrow limits of self-love, that the most piercing beams of uncreated love, cannot penetrate into our gloomy retirement, where that spark of reason, which might have directed us to a higher light, is at length totally extinguished.

The light of the Gospel is never absolutely rejected, but through the influence of sin, according to those words of Christ: *Every one, that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.* And here we see the cause, why so many persons cast themselves headlong into materialism, denying the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and treating every impression of his power as the workings of a disordered brain. But as the testimony of blind men can never persuade a reasonable person, that he is under a delusion, while he sees, feels, and admires, the material sun; so the joint testimony of all the incredulous men in the world, may justly be counted of as little force, when they would prove scriptural illumination to be downright fanaticism. Notwithstanding all the impotent arguments that can be brought against him, the christian believer deserves not to be

esteemed an enthusiast, when he declares that *faith is the evidence of things not seen* ; since he has reason and revelation to plead in his favour, his own experience, and that of his brethren, together with the universal testimony of the primitive church.

As you do not rank with professed atheists, it is probable that you do sometimes pray to the Supreme Being. Among other blessings, you implore of him in a peculiar manner, *patience* to sustain those afflictions, which are necessary to the perfection of virtue. Now if you are persuaded, that God is able not only to *hear* but to *strengthen* you with his might : and, further, if you believe that, when he thus strengthens you for the day of affliction, you shall have any perception of his influencing power ; we are then perfectly agreed. But if you pray, without a confidence that God attends to your prayer, and without ever expecting to receive the assistance you implore of Him, you act like persons deprived of their reasoning powers : with the fear of praying like enthusiasts, you pray after the manner of idiots, and afford as manifest a token of extravagant folly, as though you should intreat tempests to grow calm, or beseech rivers to return to their sources. It is by such a method of reasoning, the true minister resists the attacks of prejudiced philosophers, solicitous to make it appear, that the sanctifying and consoling operations of the Holy Spirit are as conformable to reason, as they are correspondent to our urgent necessities.

But, if it still be urged by the enemies of inspiration, that we have no distinct idea of the manner, in which any knowledge is conveyed to the soul, except by means of our reason, or our senses ; and that to speak of things, which will admit of no clear explanation, is running into the wildest enthusiasm. No, returns the faithful pastor : it is not usual to esteem that man an enthusiast, who is employed in bestowing alms upon the poor, though he can neither explain to us, how his gold was produced in the mine, how his will actuates his hand, or how the feelings of charity are excited in his bosom. If nature operates every thing in a mysterious manner, it is unreasonable to expect, that the operations of grace should be conducted in a less mysterious way. This is one of the arguments proposed by our Lord to Nicodemus. *Except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.* But, it may be, you have no compre-

hension of spiritual things : *marvel not*, however, at this ; since there are many things above thy comprehension in the natural world. ‘ The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell, whence it cometh and whither it goeth ; so is every one that is born of the Spirit : ’ they prove the operations of that Spirit by incontestable effects, though they are unacquainted with many things, respecting the manner in which those effects are produced.

We may here very properly apply what professor Vernet has said, concerning the manner in which God has frequently manifested the truth to his Prophets. “ It is easy to conceive,” says this judicious divine, “ that He who created the soul as well as the body, and who for that reason is called the Father of Spirits, can never be at a loss for adequate means of communicating to us, when he judges it necessary, ideas and discoveries wholly different from those, which we are able to acquire either by our own powers, or through the assistance of other persons. If the most ignorant classes of men are acquainted with the art of reciprocally communicating their thoughts to each other ; how much more may we imagine, that God is able to act upon the soul, both externally and internally ; he, who has already placed within us some confused notions of primitive truth ; he, who holds second causes in his hand, and animates all nature.”

But if it be asked, are not Prophets properly so called, the only persons whom God is pleased to privilege with such impressions as are formed by the seal of his Spirit ; It might with equal propriety, be enquired, whether the Apostles alone were privileged with that evangelical faith, which respects invisible and incomprehensible things ? “ A soul,” says the illustrious Croufaz, “ upon which the Spirit of God has moved, muses upon her Creator with ineffable delight, and contemplates her Redeemer with a mixture of gratitude, admiration, and transport. O my God ! such a soul is incessantly crying out, when shall I see thy face ? When shall thy light illuminate me without any darkening cloud ? To approach Thee is my only happiness. Happy they who praise thee without ceasing.”

“ I acknowledge,” continues this christian philosopher, “ that these may be the natural effects of that attention,

“ with which the Spirit of God, has graciously fixed our
 “ minds upon those objects, which revelation presents to our
 “ view, and upon which it directs us to occupy our thoughts.
 “ But I am not afraid of going beyond the truth, when I
 “ add, that the Spirit of God by his own immediate agency,
 “ may inspire the soul with this sacred taste and these exalted
 “ sentiments. Corporeal objects act upon the organs of
 “ sense by a power, which they undoubtedly receive from
 “ God. This may, in some measure, be understood : but
 “ in what manner their action passes from thence upon the
 “ soul, is a mystery too obscure to admit of an explanation.
 “ Christian philosophers have conceived, that the will of
 “ God, and some established order of his appointment, are
 “ the only causes of those internal sentiments, of which these
 “ impressions upon the outward organs are but the occasion.
 “ This being the case, under what pretext can we refuse to
 “ believe, that the Spirit of God may give rise to such sen-
 “ timents in the soul, as are abundantly more conformable to
 “ the nature of their holy cause, than those ordinary senti-
 “ ments, which are, nevertheless, referred to the will of God,
 “ as their first and true cause ? Such are those sentiments,
 “ which St. Paul so earnestly solicited for his followers at
 “ Ephesus, and for the increase of which, he implored
 “ upon them the influence of the Holy Spirit.”

Such also are those impressions, motions, and aids of the
 Holy Spirit, both mediate and immediate, for which we offer
 up so many ardent supplications in different parts of our
 public service. Every christian liturgy is filled with petitions
 of this nature ; petitions, which are conformable to the
 principles of christianity, the voice of reason, and the
 necessities of sinful men, though they usually appear to the
 children of this world, as the mere unintelligible jargon of
 enthusiasm. The minister, who strictly follows the example
 of St. Paul in this respect, will most probably be regarded
 as a visionary by the ignorant and the profane : but,
 while he breaths out these ardent prayers, in humble faith,
 accompanying them with those discourses and that conduct,
 which are correspondent to such requests ; he has, at least,
 a satisfactory consciousness, that he has never practised the
 arts of an impostor with the liturgy in his hand, nor played
 the part of a comedian in a christian pulpit.

As to the real advantages, which would flow from our

doctrine of the dispensations, though they have been adverted to in various passages of this work, yet it appears not unnecessary to take a transient review of them in this place.

1. By an accurate acquaintance with these dispensations, every evangelical preacher may become *an approved workman, rightly dividing the word of truth*; and a *faithful servant*, distributing to every domestic of his Master's household, that peculiar portion of spiritual food, which is suited to their several circumstances.

2. By exactly dividing the dispensations of grace, we are enabled to mark out the boundaries, of those particular states, which believers of different classes are observed to enjoy. We ascertain that degree of spiritual life, to which we ourselves have attained: we distinguish the various graces bestowed upon us: we discover whatever great promise is still before us, and solicit, without ceasing, the complete accomplishment of that promise. He, who preaches the Gospel, without tracing out the lines which separate the three dispensations of grace, may be said to exhibit a sundial, upon which the hours are unmarked, and from which little else than confusion, if not dangerous mistakes, can be expected to flow.

3. By the light of this doctrine, true worshippers of every different class, may be taught to acknowledge and esteem one another, according to their different degrees of faith. Nothing is more common in a christian country, than to see the rigidly orthodox, uncharitably treating, as hopeless outcasts, not only those virtuous deists, who are yet unacquainted with the Son, but even those pious socinians, who are resting satisfied with that inglorious state, in which the first disciples of our Lord were so long detained; and who are unable to acknowledge any more than his humanity. Let these orthodox professors become acquainted with the various dispensations of grace, and, ceasing to offend, either virtuous deists or pious socinians, with their furious anathemas; they will treat the former with all the benevolence, which St. Peter once expressed toward Cornelius, and the latter with that brotherly kindness, which Aquila manifested in his carriage toward Apollos. On the other hand, if those christians, who are yet carnal, had any proper idea of these different dispensations; if they could but believe that the

same Jesus who was once outwardly manifested among the Jews, still continues to manifest himself in the Spirit, through every part of the world, to those who are anxiously pressing into the Kingdom of God; if they could admit, but in theory, this eminent dispensation of grace, they would no longer argue against those, as enthusiasts, who speak of the influence of the Spirit in scriptural terms.

So long as this glorious light shall continue in obscurity, so long we may expect to observe among christians the most unfriendly disputes: and though they never again may kindle blazing piles for their mutual destruction, yet bitter words interchanged among them, like so many inveterate shafts, will still continue to declare, that war is in their hearts. Those who imagine themselves in possession of the purest christian faith, will treat others, who indulge different sentiments, as *infidels* and *heretics*; while these in return, will stigmatize their uncharitable brethren with the opprobrious epithets of *enthusiast* and *fanatic*. But when every minister of the Gospel enlightened with truth and glowing with charity, shall faithfully conduct the flock of Christ from grace to grace, and from strength to strength, then the foremost of that flock shall manifest their religious superiority, by giving proofs of the most unfeigned affection toward the meanest and most infirm of their spiritual companions. Copying the humble courtesy of St. Paul, these unassuming elders will cry out, among their younger brethren; 'Let us, as many as be like-minded, forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, press earnestly toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded,' that perfect charity which hopeth all things, engages us to believe, that *God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same things.*

It may not be amiss to conclude these remarks upon the three grand dispensations of grace, by observing, how imperfect worshippers deceive themselves, while they refuse to proceed from faith to faith. It is the opinion of many sincere deists, who are zealous for the dispensation of the Father, that were they to embrace the dispensation of the Son, they must necessarily detract from the honour due to the incomprehensible God. This prejudice, however, evidently

flows from the want of spiritual discernment ; since the holy Scriptures instruct us, that, when *at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, that he is Lord of Heaven and earth*, such religious adoration shall be considered as ultimately heightening *the glory of God the Father*.

Now if the Father leads us to the Son, by the dawns of his grace, as we are taught by the following passages—
 ‘ No man can come unto me, except the Father draw him. Simon Peter said, Thou art Christ the Son of the living God : Jesus answered him Blessed art thou Simon Barjona : for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven :’ it is equally certain, that when we come to Christ, he teaches us both to know and worship the Father. Observe the language of our Lord, with respect to this point. ‘ I am the way, the truth, and the life : no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify Thee. This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. Righteous Father, the world hath not known thee ; but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me,’ to make an open display of thy glory upon earth. *I have declared unto them thy name, and I will declare it*, yet more perfectly. From these passages it evidently appears, that the faith of the Son can never possibly take away from that profound veneration, which is due to the Father. And what is here observed, relative to the faith of the Son, is no less true with regard to the faith of the Holy Spirit. For if, under the dispensation of Jesus, we learn to address *our Father, who is in Heaven*, with a degree of humble confidence, it is only under the dispensation of the Spirit, that we are enabled to make those addresses with all that filial reverence and that lively fervour, which the Gospel requires. *This spirit of adoption*, by witnessing *with our spirit, that we are the children of God*, assists us to bow before our celestial Parent, with that ineffable veneration and love, which are due to the Supreme Being. If philosophers would duly reflect upon these important truths, they would no longer tremble under the vain apprehension of becoming idolaters and tritheists, by admitting the doctrines of the Gospel. On the contrary, we might indulge a hope, that these proud reasoners would one day be seen, in company with humble believers, approaching the God of their

Fathers, through the intercession of the Son, and with the energy of the Holy Spirit; crying out, with St. Paul: 'There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus; and through him we have access, by one Spirit, unto the Father.'

There is another class of worshippers, who are zealous for the dispensation of the Son, and who, wholly taken up with the *word manifested in the flesh*, imagine that his dispensation is rendered contemptible, if it be represented merely as the commencement of christianity, while the perfection of the Gospel is declared to consist in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. To the consideration of such, we would propose the following expression of St. Paul: 'Henceforth, know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet, henceforth know we him no more,' after this manner. And though our Lord is acknowledged to have spoken on this wise, 'whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day: for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed'—yet, it must likewise be confessed, that he immediately added, *It is the Spirit, that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.*

The following observations, it is hoped, will entirely dissipate the fears of these pious persons. *When the Spirit of truth is come*, saith our Lord, *he will guide you into all truth*; and especially into those truths, which respect faith toward me, and repentance toward my Father. 'He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew unto you,' the merits of my righteousness, the efficacy of my death, and the power of my Gospel. *The Father shall give you another Comforter, whom ye already know in part; for he dwelleth with you, even now in my bodily presence: but, hereafter, He shall be in you, when I shall have baptized you with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven.* 'I will not leave you comfortless: I will come unto you. The world seeth me no more; but ye shall see me,' in the effects of my indwelling power: and *because I live ye shall live also. At that day, ye shall know, that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I, by my spirit, in you.* This spiritual abode of Christ in the souls of his people, is the most glorious-mystery of the Gospel; and if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is at best, but

a disciple either of Moses, or of John the Baptist ; he is not in a spiritual, but in a carnal state.

‘ I live : yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. Christ is our life. The mystery, which hath been hid from ages, is Christ in you the hope of glory. My little children, of whom I travail in birth, until Christ be formed in you.’ These, with a thousand other scriptural expressions, must be utterly incomprehensible to those, who, resting contented with a literal knowledge of the incarnate *word*, admit not the internal manifestation of Christ, by his spirit of revelation, wisdom, and power. *The deep things of God are revealed unto us by his Spirit* : and, without this Spirit, we must continue strangers to the most exalted truths of the Gospel, and be cut off from the purest springs of religious consolation. *This is he*, saith St. John, ‘ that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ : not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit, that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.’ As though the Apostle should say ; Christ indeed, in the first part of his ministry, proclaimed that repentance toward God, which his own disciples, as well as John the Baptist, were accustomed to seal with a baptism of water. And to this sacred ceremony he himself condescendingly submitted. But, after this, he proceeded farther, when, as a visible Saviour, he sealed his own dispensation of grace with a baptism of blood upon the cross. Moreover, it is the Spirit, that gives testimony to the unsearchable truths of the Gospel, by his still more excellent baptism ; deepening our repentance toward God, and adding a *full assurance* to our faith in Jesus Christ. Let no one then suspect, that the manifestation of the Spirit must necessarily obscure the glory of the Son ; especially since it is expressly declared, ‘ that no man can say, that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.’

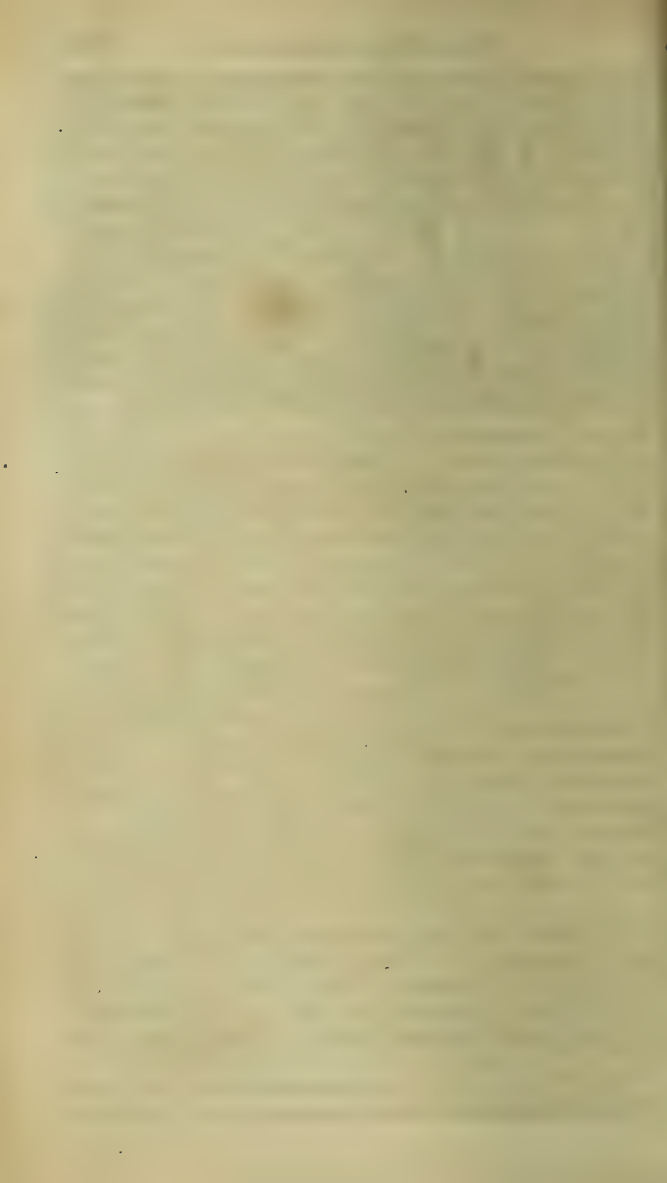
Before we close this section, we have to lament, that this important part of the Gospel is so rarely published among professing christians. The greater part of the clergy are to be ranked with the most violent opposers of spiritual religion. They insult its followers, they condemn its advocates unheard, and presumptuously *speak evil of those things which they know not*. As there was a time, in which the Jewish church overlooked the most important promise under the dispensation of the Father ; so it was intimated that a time

would come, in which the christian church, sunk into a state of listlessness and incredulity, should neglect the grand promise under the dispensation of the Son. *When the Son of man cometh, saith our Lord, shall he find faith on the earth?* He will find little indeed, if we may either rely upon our own observations, or give credit to the most solemn assertions of a predicting Apostle.

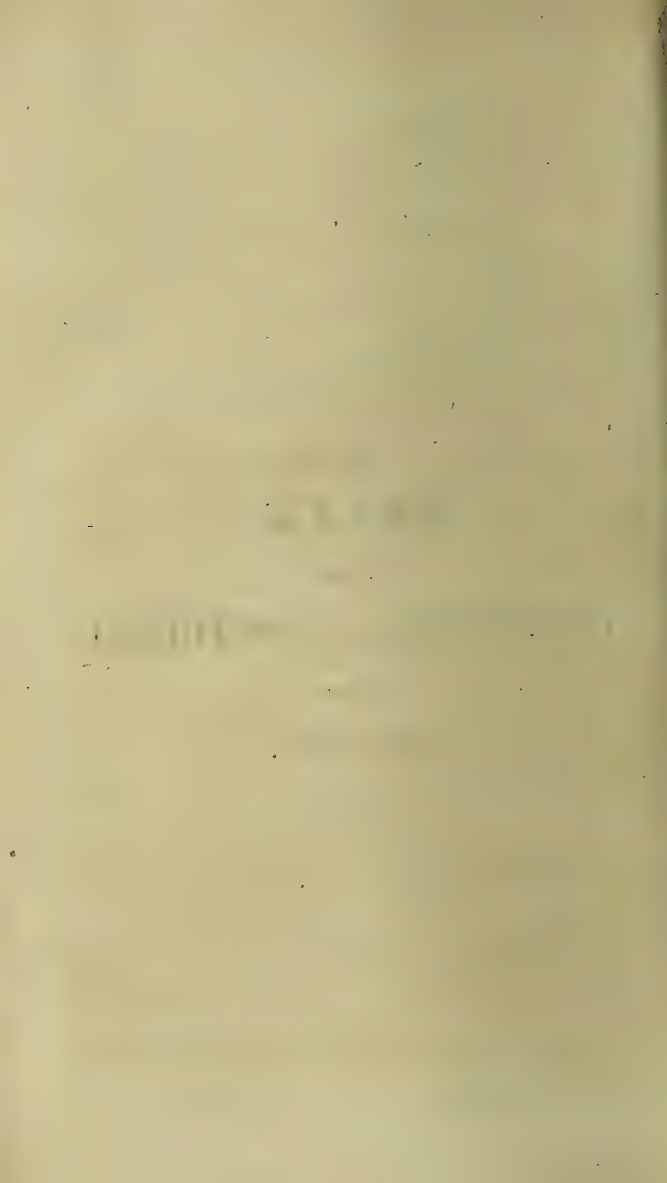
All our ecclesiastics, however, are not of this description. Among the thousands of this sacred order, we find many, who are possessed of godly fear, scriptural faith, and christian charity. These pious evangelists are anxious for the salvation of those committed to their charge. They labour to spread the Kingdom of God among men, though they have never experienced that kingdom according to the fulness of the promise. And though they are unacquainted with the abundant plenitude of the Gospel, yet they cease not to publish that Gospel abroad with affection and zeal. They preach the cross of Christ; but they proclaim not the spiritual coming of a risen Saviour. As their careless brethren refuse to publish the coming of the Spirit, through infidelity and prejudice, so these upright ministers neglect to preach it, through uncertainty and irresolution. If they even entertain a just opinion of the doctrine for which we plead, yet they are restrained from speaking frequently and freely upon the subject, because, as many false christians have rendered the dispensation of the Son contemptible in the eyes of deists; so many vainly-inspired zealots have caused the dispensation of the Spirit to appear ridiculous before sober-minded christians. But notwithstanding the reproach, which many fanatics, of various sects, have brought upon this sublime part of the Gospel, by mingling with it the reveries of an heated imagination, yet it will constantly be regarded, by every well-instructed christian, as the quintessence of our holy religion.

There appears little probability, that this neglected doctrine will be either universally received or preached, in our degenerate day. But as truth has never been left entirely destitute of witnesses, and as the generality of ministers have still courage enough to maintain, before an unbelieving world, the dispensation of the Son; we may reasonably hope, that they will continue to mention the dispensation of the Spirit, at least, on every commemoration of the pentecostal glory.

By this means we may preserve among us a precious spark of sacred fire, till our returning Lord, bursting through the clouds of incredulity, shall kindle the spark into an everlasting flame. In that day, the idle pretensions of enthusiasts shall no more influence believers to reject the Holy Spirit, than the vain pretension of those false Christs who formerly appeared among the Jews, could influence the faithful to reject their only Lord and Saviour. The dispensation of the Spirit shall then appear as glorious to the eyes of admiring christians, as the dispensation of the Son once appeared to ravished Simeon : and every apostolic pastor shall conduct his flock from the dispensation of the Father, through that of the Son, to that of the Holy Spirit, in as rapid a manner, as St. Peter is reported to have done in his first discourse.



AN
ESSAY
ON THE
CONNEXION OF DOCTRINES
WITH
MORALITY.



AN
ESSAY, &c.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

SOME divines, almost wholly occupied with the *doctrines* of the Gospel, are not sufficiently careful to insist upon *morality*; while philosophers, for the most part, as wholly taken up with *morality*, treat the *doctrines* of the Gospel with neglect and disdain. It is to reconcile, if possible, these two mistaken classes of men, that a few observations are here presented upon the *importance* of such doctrines, and their *immediate connection* with morality.

Morality is the science, which regulates our manners, by teaching us to know and to follow justice, rendering to every one their due, love, honour, obedience, tribute, &c. The whole of this morality is included in those maxims of natural and revealed religion—*Whatsoever ye would, that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them. Render unto Caesar, the things, which are Caesar's; and unto God, the things, which are God's.* Hence it follows, that pure morality must maintain some form of divine worship.

Some moralists, it is true, imagine it possible to be *strictly just*, without making any profession of piety. But if *justice* consists in doing that to *others*, which we desire may be done to *ourselves*; it is clear, that every man who honours not the supreme Being must be *unjust* as well as *impious*: since if we are parents or benefactors, we manifest so deep a sensibility of the injustice of our children or dependants, when they repay our kindness with insolence and ingratitude.

Doctrines are, in general, *precepts*: but by *doctrines* are here, particularly, understood, those *instructions*, which Christ and his Apostles have given, respecting the different relations,

in which we stand to God, and to each other, together with the various duties consequent upon such relations.

Such instructions, as are transmitted from generation to generation, under the name of *maxims* or *doctrines*, whether they be true or false, have a prodigious effect upon the conduct of those who admit them. In the ancient world, how many hapless infants have been sacrificed among the Greeks and Romans to that barbarous *maxim*, that *fathers have the right of life and death over their new-born children*. In the modern world, how vast a number of unborn infants, and how many fanciful heroes are falling every year unfortunate victims to those maxims of false honour: *It is better to destroy the fruit of an illicit love, or to plunge a sword into the bosom of a friend, than to live without that, which constitutes the honour of the sexes*. Overturn these maxims of a false point of honour, and you destroy the principles, upon which a thousand impious actions are committed.

Mankind can no more divest themselves of all pre-possession in favour of general maxims, than they can lose sight of determining motives. The atheist and the infidel have their particular doctrines, as well as the just man and the christian. The inconsistency of some philosophers, in this respect, is here worthy to be noted, who begin their discourses by decrying maxims in general, and conclude them, by setting forth and maintaining the most dangerous doctrines. *The road to permanent happiness, say they, is both convenient and spacious. The Almighty pays but little regard to our actions, and has endued us with passions for the very purpose of gratifying them*. They insinuate, that if a man is sufficiently rich to entertain a number of women, he may innocently enjoy whatever pleasure their society can afford him: and that, when he has no longer any relish for life, he may as innocently blow out his brains. Such are the *doctrines*, and such is the *morality*, which many ill-instructed professors are preaching among us at this day; giving ample testimony, that no men are more ready to set up for *dogmatists*, than those who reject the *doctrines* of the Gospel.

CHAP. I.

PHILOSOPHERS, SO CALLED, EXALT THEMSELVES, WITHOUT REASON, AGAINST THE DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL.

AS those, who affect exterior acts of devotion, are not always possessed of the most solid piety ; so they, who are foremost to magnify philosophy, are not always to be regarded as the wisest of mankind. It must, however, be confessed, that many christians have afforded philosophers too just a subject of scandal, by continually opposing *faith* to *reason* : as though, in order to be possessed of the richest christian grace, it were necessary to renounce that noble faculty, which chiefly distinguishes us from the brute creation. Like the great Apostle, we may rationally oppose *faith* to *sense* ; but we can never, without the highest indiscretion, oppose it to *reason*. We should even be cautious of saying with M. de Voltaire and St. Louis, “ Take heed how you follow the guidance of your weak reason.” The reason of man is acknowledged to be weak, when compared with the intelligence of superior Beings. But whatever its weakness may be, it becomes us, with gratitude, to follow it as our guide : since, in a gloomy night, it is better to profit from the smallest taper, that can be procured, than obstinately to shut our eyes and walk at random. If believers prefer the revelation of Christ before the philosophy of infidels, it is because the most enlightened reason influences their choice.

The true believer is not afraid of pleading against modern philosophers before the tribunal of reason. “ You accuse me,” he may say, “ of superstition ; because in pursuing those “ honours, riches and pleasures, which are external, I have “ chosen the rough uncomfortable path of piety. But while “ I act thus, I act in no less conformity to the principles of “ reason, than the man, who, to expel a sweet poison, receives “ a bitter antidote, and cheerfully submits to, a disagreeable “ regimen, till he is restored to perfect health. If the sacrifice of a few trifling enjoyments for the present, will secure “ to me the possession of everlasting felicity, I do but imitate the prudent husbandman, who deprives himself, to-day,

“ of a few bushels of grain, that after a few months of patient
 “ expectation, he may reap from his trivial loss an abundant
 “ harvest. And is it unreasonable in me to adopt such a
 “ mode of conduct ; especially, when the sweet hope of pro-
 “ mised blessings affords me, even now, a joy as *solid* and
 “ *constant*, as yours is *transitory* and *vain* ? ”

Ye men of boasted wisdom ! we dare assert that the secret
 springs of your morality are *weak* and *gross*, in comparison
 with ours. You maintain, that, in order to bind a rational
 creature to the practice of morality, nothing further is requi-
 site than the consideration of his own interests. You affirm,
 moreover, with equal confidence, that all attempts to urge
 mankind to the exercise of virtue, by the consideration of
 evangelical motives, is but depending on the force of ties,
 which are too feeble to be binding. But you perceive not, that
 the method upon which you proceed, with so much self-ap-
 probation, is entirely unworthy of true moralists, since it
 merely opposes one evil, by means of another full as detest-
 able, in giving that to *pride*, which it wrests from *other vicious*
propensities. And you, undiscerning instructor of Emilius
 and Sophia ! you, who say in your confession of faith : *Un-*
knowing how to determine, I neither admit revelation nor reject
it : rejecting only the obligation to receive it—if you have remov-
 ed those powerful motives to true virtue, which are drawn
 from the Gospel, what have you given us in exchange ?
 “ Love, that you may be loved again. Become amiable,
 “ that you may be happy. Make yourself esteemed, that
 “ you may be obeyed. What greater felicity can a noble
 “ soul possess, than that which flows from the pride of virtue,
 “ joined with beauty.” How puerile and insufficient are
 these motives, when compared with those, which the Gospel
 presents ! Leading mankind to virtue by such a route as this,
 is it not to inspire them, at once, with all a pharisee’s pride
 and a Jezebel’s vanity ?

When we draw a vail over the sublime objects of faith,
 and place before men the mere consideration of some present
 advantage, in order to influence their conduct ; then we actu-
 ally treat the rational part of the creation, as we are accus-
 tomed to deal with the most brutish animals. Behold that swine
 making up to a heap of corn. Throw but a single hand-
 ful of that heap in his way, and he will pass no further ;
 since fifty grains of corn, scattered immediately before his

face, will attract him more forcibly than as many bushels piled up at a distance. Were it possible to make him an offer of all the harvests in the universe, after a single hour; yet he would not sacrifice for them all, the poor enjoyment of the present moment. He, who thus fixes his attention upon temporal and sensible objects, forgets that his soul is immaterial and immortal. He, who cannot be engaged to the practice of virtue, but by means of such unworthy motives, may be said to infuse morality in the cup of Circe, lest he should be constrained to receive it at the hand of Christ.

Why are infidels and unstable christians observed to fall before temptation? The only reason that can be given is, that, being affected in too lively a manner with the things that are immediately before them, they are in no condition to contemplate those objects which are more remote, of how great importance soever they may be. Hence, the inestimable objects of faith appear to them, as the fixed stars discover themselves to the vulgar, despoiled of their real magnitude and glory, and apparently of too little consequence to merit much attention. With the sincere christian, the case is wholly different. His faith, which is a gift from God, may be compared to a divine telescope, by which the most distant objects are brought within his ken. And of this sacred help he happily avails himself, till wholly certified of the nature and importance of celestial things, he necessarily acquires ideas and sentiments suitable to so grand a discovery. Observe here the ground of St. Paul's definition of faith. Destitute of the same assistance, what wonder is it, that the infidel should remain a perfect stranger to the christian's sacred views and exalted sentiments! He foolishly rests contented with the naked eye of his reason, regardless of that ignorance, and those prejudices, with which it is too frequently obscured. Thus, self-deluded, he despises the divine instrument above described, and scoffs at those, who are known to use it; just as the illiterate were formerly accustomed to set at nought the most profound astronomers, and to look with derision upon their mysterious apparatus.

As to the power of this faith, by which alone any spiritual discovery can be made, it is too wonderful to be credited either by the ignorant or the impious. It *removes mountains*: and, to the possessor of it, *nothing is impossible*. It affords the believer a perfect *victory* over the present world, by putting

into his hand a *shield*, which is impenetrable to *all the fiery darts of the wicked*. Here is the christian's security ! Behind this buckler of celestial temper, he remains in undisturbed tranquility, while the incredulous philosopher, together with the abandoned sensualist, are hurling against it the feeble darts of ridicule and malice.

It must be acknowledged, that many excellent precepts of morality are found in the Alcoran, and in the works of modern philosophers : but it must be asserted, at the same time, that the enemies of Christ are chiefly indebted to revelation for every just conception of religious truth. The authors of the Alcoran, of Emilius, and the Philosophical Dictionary, before ever they began to dogmatize, were apprized, that there is a God, whom it is our duty to love above all things, and who has commanded us to love our neighbour as ourselves. It is, therefore, matter of little surprise, that a lovely sentiment of this kind, should here and there brighten a page of their gloomy volumes. Their false coin could never have become current in the world, unless they had artfully mingled with it some little quantity of the pure gold of scriptural truth.

We shall conclude this chapter with a beautiful passage from Tertullian, in which he points out the difference between a true christian, and a philosopher so called. After having spoken of the vices, with which the Greek philosophers were infected, he makes the following reply to a very common objection. " It is objected, that some also among
" us, are guilty of violating the laws of virtue. But it must
" be remembered, that such offenders pass no longer with us
" for christians : while among you, after the commission of
" many vicious actions, philosophers still preserve their reputation, and continue to be had in honour. What resemblance then is there, between the christian and the philosopher ? The one is a disciple of Greece ; the other of Heaven. The one seeks to establish a fair reputation : the other aspires to work out his salvation. The one speaks admirable words : the other performs good actions. The one destroys, and the other builds up. The one deals in error, and the other in truth."

CHAP. II.

THE DOCTRINES OF NATURAL RELIGION
AND PHILOSOPHY ARE INSUFFICIENT TO
PRODUCE TRUE CHARITY IN THE HEART.

THE doctrines of natural religion, such as the Being of a God, an overruling providence, and a judgment to come, are the *first* doctrines of the Gospel; but, hitherto, they have never been found sufficient to lead men into the love and practice of solid virtue.

As the earth, deprived of its primitive fecundity, requires not only the genial influence of the sun, but must be enriched and assisted by many other means, in order to recover its lost fertility: so the truths of natural religion can never restore the degenerate soul to its lost perfection, without the powerful assistance of a revealed Gospel. On this account, the Father of mankind has condescended to instruct us in doctrines, more efficacious than those, which unassisted nature can discover, and abundantly better suited to our weakness: that the tree of morality, having more numerous and vigorous roots, might be assisted to produce fruit of a more exquisite flavor, and in greater abundance, than it formerly had done. *What the Law, says St. Paul, could not do, [the natural or mosaic Law] in that it was weak through the flesh [i. e. our corrupted nature, which stands in need of greater helps than those, which the Law can afford] God sending his own Son condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, by a power derived from him. Hence, this promised Saviour was spoken of as the desire of all nations. And hence, that public declaration of Christ concerning the nature of his mission to the children of men: I am come, that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*

Without revelation, we are left a prey to the most cruel uncertainty. The Almighty created man, that he might partake of his own felicity: and, after having placed in his heart an ardent desire after the *sovereign good*, he made a benign discovery of Himself, as the *one only and inexhaustible source of true blessedness*. But, since the darkness of sin has

overspread our understanding, we have lost sight of this *sovereign good*, and are seeking it, where it cannot possibly be found. Like Ixion in the fable, while we embrace a cloud, we imagine ourselves in possession of a sublime reality. And even after repeated convictions of our folly, uninstructed by disappointment, we set out again in pursuit of objects full as frivolous as those, by which we have been already beguiled. Philosophers, unable to guide mankind to true happiness, are vainly searching after it themselves in darkness and uncertainty. Divided into a variety of sects, they maintain a hundred different opinions upon a subject of so great importance. So that after all the researches of its professors, philosophy has left the world in a state of equal perplexity, with a man, who, having but one arrow to level at the mark, has a hundred different marks proposed to him at the same time.

In all this uncertainty, how happy is it to discover a volume, which decides the momentous question in so clear a manner, that reason itself can object nothing to the decision! This book, the most ancient that can be produced, informs us that JEHOVAH once appeared to the father of the faithful, and said unto him, I am the mighty, all-sufficient God: walk before me, and be thou perfect. So, will I make my covenant between me and thee:’ and thou shalt become a joyful possessor of the sovereign good. When these truths are once cordially assented to, the perplexity of the believer is then sweetly terminated, and his high vocation completely pointed out. From this time, he feels the importance of those doctrines, which, like steady lights, eclipse a thousand glimmering meteors, and discover, amidst surrounding dangers, a sure though narrow road to happiness. And here it is to be observed, that upon these important truths, as well as upon every other essential point, christians of all denominations are perfectly agreed.

What is meant by *walking before God in perfection*, is fully explained in the following terms; *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; and thy neighbour as thyself*. Now, unregenerate man, far from filling up these duties, neglects the Supreme Being, and prefers his own particular interest, to that of society in general; affording the strongest proof, that he possesses neither genuine piety, nor undissembled charity. Hence, before such a man can become truly virtuous, it is evident, that his principles must be improved, and his

inclinations rectified. And till these salutary changes take place in his soul, always vicious, restless, and selfish, he will continually be making some addition to his external errors, and his internal misery.

Deists, while they acknowledge, that we are bound to love both God and man, presume upon the sufficiency of their own power for the due performance of these extensive duties. Were they, however, truly anxious to practise these virtues in as unreserved a manner, as even natural religion requires, they would quickly perceive the weakness of humanity, and acknowledge the deepest need of divine assistance. But so long as the piety of these persons consists in *honouring God with their lips, while their hearts are far from him*: and while they boast of manifesting toward mankind love so universal, that none but their enemies are excluded from it: so long, they will need no other assistance for the performance of these wretched services, than that which corrupted nature can amply afford.

It is frequently asserted, that the mysteries of *Redemption*, are utterly useless with respect to morality, and that the benignity of God, as exemplified in our *creation* and *preservation*, is a sufficient motive to affection and obedience on the part of man. But since man has become a sinful and miserable creature, every motive to rectitude, that can possibly be drawn from his *creation* and *preservation*, has lost much of its former constraining influence. How many persons may we find in the world, who, instead of being penetrated with gratitude on account of these blessings, lament, with despairing Job and Jeremiah, that ever they were born! And when the miseries of *life* have rendered it almost insupportable, can we reasonably imagine its repining possessor to be glowing with love to the deity, merely as the *Author* and *preserver* of his unhappy existence? Surely nothing can be more absurd than such a supposition. Yet how many boasted reasoners confidently maintain, that the very same gift, which wretched sufferers in every age, have thrown back to the giver with anguish and contempt; is nevertheless a motive sufficiently powerful, to engage *every* transgressor of the Almighty's law, to love him with all their heart, and serve him with all their power.

But let us suppose that man, unassisted by the doctrines of the Gospel, has some knowledge of the *sovereign good*,

and the means by which it may be obtained ; yet how superficial is this knowledge ! We might here produce a gloomy catalogue of those capital errors, into which the ancient philosophers have fallen, with regard to these important points. It must indeed, be allowed, that modern professors have corrected many of those errors : but it must be lamented, at the same time, that they have unhappily adopted others, not a whit less glaring or fatal. Passing over, in silence, the horrible systems of atheistical writers, let us listen to philosophers of greater estimation, among whom Rousseau and Voltaire may rank as the most conspicuous characters. The former of these acquired considerable reputation by his observations upon the education of youth, and the latter, by the courage with which he contended for toleration.

“ Let it be laid down,” says Rousseau, “ as an incontestable maxim, that the first movements of nature are always right : and that there is no such thing as original sin in the human heart.” How large a stride is here toward the sentiments of la Mettrie ; all whose morality was wrapt up in this single sentence, *Satisfy thy desires : they are the voice of God and of nature.* To enlarge this little quotation from J. J. Rousseau, would be a superfluous task. It must appear evident to every unprejudiced reader, from the above assertion, that the maxims of this admired philosopher have a greater tendency to advance *self-gratification*, than to promote *universal benevolence* in the world.

Turn we now to the toleration of M. de Voltaire. In his epistle to Boileau, we find him writing thus—“ I have consecrated my voice to sing the praises of virtue ; overcoming those prejudices, which are idolized by the ignorant, I dare to preach toleration to persecutors.” Now when any man comes forth, in this public manner, to plead the cause of candour and liberality, we are naturally led to admire the generosity of his conduct. And it would be well if M. de Voltaire was really deserving of all that credit, which a stranger feels disposed to give him, when he assumes so *questionable* an appearance. But, notwithstanding the praises, which this celebrated writer has bestowed upon his own humanity, and in spite of all the beautiful things he has said upon toleration, many ungenerous sentiments may be discovered in his works, which tend to renew the most bloody persecutions. Take an instance or two.

1. *It is never necessary to rise up against the religion of the Prince.* Upon this principle Jesus Christ and St. Paul were highly worthy of blame, notwithstanding the hypocrisy and idolatry, which composed the religion of Caiaphas and Tiberias.

2. 'What is called a jansenist is really a madman, a bad citizen, and a rebel. He is a bad citizen, because he troubles the order of the state: he is a rebel, because he disobeys. The molinists are madmen of a more harmless kind.' These two lovely maxims of *toleration* are to be found in a little piece of M. de Voltaire's, intitled *The voice of a philosopher and of the people*.

Had the King of France attended to this voice, he would have regarded every *jansenist*, and, for the same reason, every *protestant*, as a *bad citizen* or a *rebel*; every spark of religious moderation would have been extinguished in his royal bosom, and an effectual door thrown open to the terrible exertions of tyrannical power. These pretended rebels might then have perished unpitied and unheard; while the bigoted Prince, convinced that *a man must cease to be a fanatic before he merits toleration*, might have gloried in the rectitude of his public conduct. Such a Prince might have commanded his blood-thirsty troops to advance under the banners of modern philosophy, leaving M. de Voltaire to animate them against the innocent with, what he calls, *The voice of a philosopher*.

It appears then, according to M. de Voltaire, that every subject should profess the religion of his Prince. Nor is this opinion less earnestly contended for by J. J. Rousseau, who tells us in his *Emilius*, that *every daughter should be of her mother's religion, and that every woman should profess the religion of her husband*. So that, if a man should turn from the *true* and embrace a *false* religion, his wife and children are bound to apostatize with him: and, in case of a refusal on their part, J. J. Rousseau, while he affects to plead the cause of liberty, pronounces upon them a sentence of condemnation. Upon these principles of *toleration*, the father of the family is authorised to persecute his non-conforming wife and children, and a Prince may lawfully take up arms against such of his subjects as are fanatics. If the benevolence and morality of these candid philosophers were to be substituted in the place of that liberality and love, which the Gospel requires, to what a deluge of misery would it give rise both in families and in

common-wealths! Kings would tyrannize over the conscience of their subjects, husbands over that of their wives, and parents over that of their children: nor would the least religious liberty be experienced by any class of men, except by the Princes of the earth. Such is the *imperfect charity*, and such the *limited freedom*, for which modern philosophers have contended with equal earnestness and approbation.

The dangerous principle of these two oracles, upon the subject of toleration, will suffice to shew, with how just reason the former of them could say—*I hate false maxims, but I detest evil actions yet more.* Alas! the horrible actions of a murdering inquisitor terminate with his life; but the intolerant doctrines of these reputed sages, may continue to scatter misery and death through the world, long after their neglected tombs are mouldered into dust.

CHAP. III.

THE GREAT INFLUENCE OF DOCTRINES UPON MORALITY.

TO ascertain the importance of doctrines in general, let us consider the influence they have upon our conduct. Our duties in life depend upon the different relations we sustain in it; and these relations affect us only, as they are understood. Thus, it is necessary, that a child should know his father, before he can truly love him in that character. This knowledge is the effect of certain *instructions* or *maxims*, which influence our manners, in proportion as they are assented to. I love the man from whom I have received my birth and education with a particular affection: but such love is founded, first upon this general doctrine, *Every child, honourably born, should reverence and love his Father*; and, secondly, upon this particular truth, *That man is thy Father*. If I am made to doubt of this general doctrine, or of this particular truth, the moral springs of that respect, love, gratitude, and obedience, which are due to my father, will necessarily be weakened; and if either the one or the other should lose all its influence over my heart, my father would then become to me equally indifferent as any other stranger.

The knowledge, therefore, of the affinities, which subsist between one being and another, is essential to morality. Why is it, that no traces of morality can be discovered among the beasts of the field? it is because they are incapable of understanding either the relation in which creatures stand to the Creator, or the affinities which subsist among the creatures themselves. As it becomes the soldier to have a distinct knowledge of his officers, that he may render to every one according to his rank, the honour and obedience to which they are severally entitled; so, preparatory to the practice of morality, it behoves us to have a clear perception of our various duties, together with the proper subjects of those duties. If some desperate malady has deprived us of this knowledge, we then rank with idiots, and are in no condition to violate the rules of morality. Hence, the lunatic who butchers his father, is not punishable among us as a parricide, because he has no acquaintance with these general maxims, *No man should murder another—Every son should honour his father*; nor has he any conception of this particular truth, *The man, whom thou art about to destroy, is thy father.*

Take away all doctrines, and you annihilate all the relations which subsist among rational creatures, you destroy all morality, and reduce man to the condition of a brute beast, allowing him to be influenced by passion and caprice, as the lowest animals are actuated by appetite and instinct. Admit only some few doctrines, and you admit only a part of your duties as well as your privileges. An example may serve to set this truth in a clear light. Suppose you have a rich father, who is at present, entirely unknown to you, and whom the world has ever looked upon as your parent; if you never receive any certain intelligence concerning him, it is plain, that you can neither render him filial obedience, nor yet succeed to his estates.

Many philosophers, who cannot reasonably be suspected of fanaticism, or even of partiality to evangelical principles, have yet strenuously insisted upon the importance of doctrine, as calculated to influence the conduct of mankind. A polished writer of this class seems to have entertained an idea, that if all men were possessed of an enlightened understanding, crimes of every kind would be unknown in the world. Observe, at least, in what terms he speaks of war, which is an evil of that complex nature, that it may justly be looked upon

as an assemblage of every possible vice. “What is the cause of that destructive rage, which, in every period, like a contagious malady, has infected the human race? Ignorance is, undoubtedly, the source of our calamities; ignorance with respect to the relations, rights, and duties of our species. Thus, the most ignorant and unpolished people have ever been the most warlike: and those ages of the world, which have been peculiarly distinguished by darkness and barbarism, have been invariably the most fruitful in murderous wars. Ignorance prepares the way for devastation; and devastation, in its turn, reproduces ignorance. With a clear knowledge of their rights, and their reciprocal duties, which form the true and only interest of nations, it is a contradiction to suppose, that those nations would voluntarily precipitate themselves into an abyss of inevitable evils.” This author, if he be supposed to speak of our *relations* and *duties* with respect to *God*, as well as those which regard our *neighbour*, had reason on his side; and especially, if his views were directed to the *knowledge* of every powerful motive, which should constrain us to fill up those *duties*.

Upon these principles, of what fatal neglect are those persons guilty, who, being charged with the religious instruction of princes and people, leave both immersed in a deplorable ignorance, which draws after it the horrors of war, with all the various calamities that overspread the face of Christendom!

CHAP. IV.

HOW THE DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL COME IN TO THE SUCCOUR OF MORALITY.

IF to preach the Gospel, is to teach sinners the relations they sustain with respect to *God*, as *Creator*, *Redeemer*, and *Sanctifier*; if it is to announce the advantages which flow from this threefold relation, till, penetrated with gratitude and love, mankind apply themselves to fulfil the several duties to which they stand engaged; we may challenge the world, to point out any knowledge of equal importance with that, which is discovered in the Gospel. To deprive us, then, of

the doctrines contained in this Gospel, is it not to suppress the most important instructions we can possibly receive ; is it not to conceal from us a Testament, which is made wholly in our favour ? To decide this question, we shall here consider what influence these doctrines have upon morality.

The virtues of worldly men, as well as their vices, are little else than a kind of traffic carried on by an inordinate self-love. From this impure source the most amiable of their actions flow ; and hence, instead of referring all things *primarily* to God, they act with an eye to their own immediate advantage. Christ has offered a remedy to this grand evil, by teaching us, that to love the Deity *with all our heart*, is the *first commandment* of the Law ; and that to *love ourselves*, and *our neighbour as ourselves*, is but a *secondary commandment* in the sight of God : thus leading us up to divine love, as the only source of pure virtue. When self-love is once reduced to this wholesome order, and moves in exact obedience to the Creator's Law, it then becomes truly commendable in man, and serves as the surest rule of fraternal affection.

Evangelical morality ennobles our most ordinary actions, such as those of *eating* and *drinking*, requiring that *all things be done to the glory of God*, i. e. in celebration of his unspeakable bounty. A just precept this, and founded upon the following doctrine, *All things are of God* : to whom of consequence they ought finally to refer. If you lose sight of this doctrine, your apparent gratitude is nothing more than a feigned virtue, which has no other motives or ends, except such as originate and lose themselves in self-love. In such circumstances, you cannot possibly assent to the justice of the grand precept above cited ; but holding it up, like the author of the Philosophical Dictionary, as a subject of ridicule, you may perhaps burlesque the feelings of a conscientious man, with regard to this command, as the comedian is accustomed to sport with the character of a modest woman. Thus many philosophers are emulating the morality and benevolence of those censorious religionists, concerning whom our Lord significantly declare, *Verily, they have their reward*.

How shall we reduce a sinner to moral order ? Will it be sufficient to press upon him the following exhortations : Love God with all thy heart : Be filled with benevolence toward all men : Do good to your very enemies ? All this would

be only commanding a rebel to seek happiness in the presence of a prince, whose indignation he has justly merited : it would be urging a covetous man to sacrifice his interests, not only to indifferent persons, but to his implacable adversaries. To effect so desirable a change in the human heart, *motives* and *assistance* are as absolutely necessary, as *counsels* and *precepts*.

Here the doctrines of the Gospel come in to the succour of morality. But how shall we sufficiently adore that incomprehensible Being, who has demonstrated to us, by the mission of his beloved Son, that the divine nature is love ! Or, how shall we refuse any thing to this gracious Redeemer, who clothed himself with morality that he might suffer in our stead ! All the doctrines of the Gospel have an immediate tendency to promote the practice of morality. That of the incarnation, which serves as the basis of the new Testament, expresses the benevolence of the Supreme Being in so striking a manner, that every sinner who cordially receives this doctrine, is constrained to surrender his heart unreservedly to God. His servile fear is changed into filial reverence, and his aversion into fervent love. He is overwhelmed with the greatness of benefits received, and, as the only suitable return for mercies of so stupendous a nature, he sacrifices, at once, all his darling vices. “ If the Son of God has united himself to my fallen nature,” such a humble believer will naturally say, “ I will not rest, till I feel myself united to this divine Mediator : if He comes to put a period to my misery, nothing shall ever put a period to my gratitude : if He has visited me with the beams of his glory, it shall henceforth become my chief concern to reflect those beams upon all around me, to his everlasting praise.”

The memorable sacrifice, which was once offered up in the person of Christ, as a propitiation for our sins, is abundantly efficacious in the same respect. This mysterious offering sets forth the malignity of our offences, and represents the compassion of the Deity in so overpowering a manner, that, while it fills us with horror for sin, it completely triumphs over the obduracy of our hearts. From the moment we come to a real perception of this meritorious sacrifice, from that moment we die to sin, till *rising again with Christ* into a new life, we become at length, wholly *renewed in the spirit of our mind*. Point out a man, who unfeignedly believes

in a crucified Saviour ; and you have discovered a man, who abhors all manner of vice, and in whom every virtue has taken root. Such a one can thankfully join the whole multitude of the faithful, and say : ‘ Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ : and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, we have obeyed, from the heart, that form of doctrine, which was delivered unto us.’ Once, indeed, when we were without the knowledge of Christ, *we were the servants of sin : but now, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, we have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.*

If you ravish from such a man these consoling and sanctifying doctrines, you will leave him either in the stupid insensibility of those, who give themselves up to carnal security, or in the perplexity of others, who are crying, *What shall we do to be saved ?* The one or the other of these states must be experienced, in different degrees, by every man, who is unacquainted with the efficacy of evangelical doctrines. And if the first moralist of the pagan world was yet observed to triumph over this stupidity and confusion, it was merely through the regenerating hope he indulged, that a restoring God, of whose internal operations he had already been favoured with some faint perception, would one day afford him a more clear and perfect light.



CHAP. V.

CONTAINING REFLECTIONS UPON THE APOSTLES' CREED.

FOR the fullest proof that a strict connexion subsists between the doctrines of the Gospel and the most perfect morality, let us cast our eye on an assemblage of those doctrines, known by the name of *The Apostles' Creed* ; a creed, to which every true christian conscientiously subscribes, and which baptized hypocrites make a solemn shew of assenting to. Our prejudice against these holy doctrines must necessarily vanish, after we have duly considered the influence they naturally have upon the conduct of true believers.

This confession of faith has three parts. The first contains

the principal doctrines of deism, or natural religion, setting forth the relation in which we stand to GOD, as *Creator*. The second part of this creed includes the principal doctrines contained in the four Gospels, and places before us the relation we bear to GOD considered in the character of *Redeemer*, or as coming to save the world by that extraordinary person, who is called the only-begotten Son of GOD. The doctrines, here enumerated, are those, with which the disciples of our Lord were wholly taken up, till the day of their spiritual baptism. The third part presents us with a recapitulation of the principal doctrines set forth in the Acts and Epistles of the Apostles. This latter part of the christian creed instructs us in our relation to GOD, as *Sanctifier*, or as coming to regenerate man by that Spirit of truth, consolation, and power, which was promised by Christ to his followers: a Spirit, whose office is to *instruct* and *sanctify* the church of Christ, to maintain a constant *communion* among its members, to seal upon their consciences *the pardon of sin*, to assure them of a future *resurrection*, and prepare them for a *life of everlasting blessedness*. Let us review these three parts of this Apostolic Creed, and observe the necessary reference they have to morality.

The first article of this creed informs us, that there is an *all-powerful God*, who is the Creator of all things in Heaven and in earth. It is evident, that no man can renounce this doctrine, without renouncing natural religion, and plunging headlong into atheism. If there is no GOD, there can be no divine Law, and morality becomes a mere insignificant term. Human laws may, indeed, restrain the wretch, who indulges a persuasion of this nature; but was it not for the authority of such laws, he would throw off the mask of decency, and laugh at the distinction between *virtue* and *vice*.

If you admit, with Epicurus, *the Being of a God*, without admitting an *overruling providence*; if you believe not, that the Creator is an *all-powerful Parent*, and, as such, peculiarly attentive to the concerns of his immense family; you then destroy all confidence in the Supreme Being: you take from the righteous their chief consolation in adversity, and from the wicked their chief restraining curb in prosperity.

Mutilate this important doctrine, by admitting only a *general* providence, and you destroy the *particular* confidence, which holy men indulge, that GOD dispenses to his children,

according to his unfearchable wisdom, both prosperity and adverfity; that He lifens to their fupplications, and will finally deliver them out of all their afflictions. You trample under foot the moft powerful motives to refignation and patience; you nourifh difcontent in the heart, and fcatter the feeds of defpair among the unfortunate. Yet all this is done by many inconfiftent advocates for morality.

Heathens themfelves were perfectly convinced, that the practice of morality was clofely connected with the above-mentioned doctrine. Cicero in his book, concerning the nature of the Gods, feems to apprehend, that the whole edifice of morality would fall to the ground, was the doctrine of a *particular* providence to be taken away. “For,” fays he, “if the Gods obferved not what is tranfacted here below, what would become of religion and holinefs, without which human life would be replete with trouble and confufion? I am perfuaded, that, in banifhing the fear of the Gods, we fhould, at the fame time, banifh from among us good faith, juftice, and all thofe other virtues, which are confidered as forming the bafis of fociety.”

CHAP. VI.

THE CONNECTION OF MORALITY WITH THE SECOND PART OF THE APOSTLES' CREED.

THE doctrines adverted to, in the latter part of the preceding chapter, compofe the religion of theifts, who believe in God, as Creator and preferver, but who know him not, as the *Reftorer* of fallen man. They, however, who give their unfeigned affent to the firft part of this Creed, will never contentedly reft at the threshold of truth. After duly attending to the bleffings of creation and prefervation, they will readily perceive how deftitute they are of that love, that gratitude, and that obedience, which are fo juftly due to the Author of all their mercies. Hence, gradually difcovering that, even with refpect to their neighbour, they are void of that juftice and charity, which fhould be mutually exercifed between man and man, they will humbly acknowledge their tranfgreffions, and begin to apprehend thofe myfterious

truths, by which the christian religion is distinguished from deism.

In our ancient confessions of faith, no mention is made of the misery and depravity of man. For what need was there to make so melancholy a truth an article of faith, since it has been publicly demonstrated in every age and country, by the conduct of all classes of men? To deny, that indisputable evidences of this truth are every day to be met with, is to deny that there are in the world, prisons, gibbets, soldiers, fields of blood, and beds of death.

If we give up the doctrine of the *fall*, and, of consequence that of the *restoration*, we give the lie to the general experience of mankind, as well as to that of our own hearts; we shut our eyes against the light of conviction; we cast away, in the midst of a labyrinth, the only clue that can guide us through its winding mazes. And after such an act of folly we shall, either with infidel philosophers, disdain to implore the assistance of the Supreme Being; or, like the haughty pharisee, we shall approach him with insolence.

If, in direct opposition to the doctrine of our depravity, we affirm, that *all things are good, and the human species as free from imperfection as the Almighty at first intended*, we then neglect the only probable means of overcoming sin, and obstinately endeavour to preclude all possibility of our restoration. Thus, by persuading a loathsome leper, that his malady is both convenient and becoming, we teach him to despise the most efficacious remedies, and leave him a deluded prey to deformity and corruption. But if it be once admitted, that we are immersed in sin, without the least possibility of restoring ourselves to a state of innocence; we have then, some degree of that humility, which disposed St. Paul to embrace a persecuted Saviour, and by which alone we can be prevailed upon to embrace the second part of this sacred Creed.

To reject that which respects, either the *Conception*, the *Birth*, the *Sufferings*, the *Death*, the *Resurrection*, or the *Ascension* of Jesus Christ, is to reject every thing that concerns this condescending Saviour; since it is one and the same Gospel, that instructs us in all these different doctrines. To remove one of these doctrines, is to break the chain of evangelical truth, by destroying one of the links, of which it is composed; it is ultimately to deny the authority of revelation, if not

absolutely to overthrow that grand edifice, of which Jesus Christ is the chief Corner-stone. In a word, as the doctrine of our *Redemption* by a crucified Saviour, is rejected either *wholly* or in part, so we reject either *in part* or *altogether*, the most constraining motives to repentance and gratitude, obedience and purity.

An unholy course of conduct proceeds from two principal causes, *pride*, and *the rebellion of the senses*; from the former, arises the disorder of our irascible passions; and from the latter, proceed all our irregular desires. Now, before these evils can be perfectly remedied, or the unholy become truly virtuous, it is necessary to eradicate *pride* from the heart, and to subdue the irregular appetites of our degenerate nature. This is undoubtedly the most difficult task to be accomplished in life: but what is impracticable to the incredulous deist, becomes actually possible to the sincere believer. By the example of his persecuted Master, he is animated to trample upon all the pride of life; and upon the Cross of his dying Lord, he is crucified to the sensual delights of this present world. *Take my yoke upon you*, says the blessed Jesus, *and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart.* Christ hath suffered for us, continues St. Peter, *leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.* Let the same mind be in you, adds St. Paul, *which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, voluntarily took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto the death of the Cross.*

It is necessary to be well acquainted with the human heart, and to have accurately observed the influence that *example* has upon mankind, in order to understand the great advantage which christians have over deists; even allowing the morality of both parties to be equally pure. What is there, of which those persons are not capable, who follow the King of Kings, encouraged by his example and supported by his power? Thus supported, no command will appear too strict to be obeyed, no burden too heavy to be sustained: but we may joyfully triumph, like the first imitators of Jesus, over that innate pride, and those sensual desires, upon which the incredulous continually striking, as upon dangerous rocks, make shipwreck of all their boasted morality.

The last article, recounted in this part of our Creed, must be supposed to have a prodigious influence upon the minds

of men. Take away the doctrine of a *judgment-day*, in which an infinitely holy and powerful God will render unto every man according to his works; you then take from the wicked those salutary fears, which restrain them in the career of vice, and from the righteous those glorious hopes, which are the strongest incentives to a life of godliness.

CHAP. VII.

THE CONNEXION OF MORALITY WITH THE THIRD PART OF THE APOSTLES' CREED.

THE first article, in the third part of this ancient confession of faith, respects the confidence which every believer indulges in the divine grace, or rather in that Holy Spirit, which sanctifies the sinful and consoles the afflicted. If, by an obstinate incredulity, we reject this sacred Comforter; we refuse the wisdom and power which result from an intimate union with the Father of lights, and disclaim all fellowship with that divine Mediator, whose humanity is far removed from the sight of men. As we could derive no possible advantage from a Sun, whose rays, concentrated in himself, should neither visit our eyes with their cheering light, nor our bodies with their kindly heat; so, if the Almighty neither illumines our minds by the Spirit of truth, nor animates our souls by the Spirit of charity, we may reasonably suppose him to have as little interest in the concerns of men, as the statue of Olympian Jupiter.

The remainder of this Creed, respects the nature of the Church, and the privileges of its members.

To destroy the doctrines, which relate to the holiness of those who truly appertain to the church of God, the *universality* of that Church, and *the communion of those saints*, of whom it is composed;—this is to overthrow the barriers, which form the pale of the Church, confounding the holy with the profane, and the sincere with the hypocritical.

Take away the doctrine, that respects the *remission of sins*, and you leave us in a state of the most cruel uncertainty. You take away from penitents the expectation that sustains them; and from believers, the gratitude that engages them.

to love much, because much has been forgiven them. You destroy the most powerful motive we have to pardon the offences of our neighbour, and leave us in a state of solicitude incompatible with that internal peace, which is the peculiar privilege of christians.

Rob us of the doctrine of a *future resurrection*, and you leave us weak in times of danger, alarmed in times of sickness, and wholly in bondage to the fear of death. But, while we remain in possession of this exhilarating truth, we can follow, without fear, the standard of the cross: the most cruel torments are rendered tolerable; and we can submit, without repining, to a temporary death, looking forward to a glorious resurrection and a happy immortality.



CHAP. VIII.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE FOREGOING OBSERVATIONS.

ALL crimes are founded upon those errors, which are first embraced in theory, before they are adopted in practice. Overthrow these errors, by opposing to them pure and incontrovertible doctrines, and you destroy sin in the bud. On the other hand, true virtue is produced by truth. Oppose a lie to this truth, and, if it be admitted, you destroy the seeds of virtue. So long as the first man had his heart penetrated with the certainty of this doctrine, *If I am ungrateful enough to disobey my Creator, I shall die*; so long he remained in a state of innocence. But to this doctrine, the tempter opposed his false promises. *You shall not surely die*, said he; on the contrary, *you shall become wise and happy as Gods*. No sooner were these delusive doctrines assented to on the part of Adam, but his understanding becoming necessarily clouded, his will was immediately beguiled: and thus, blindly following the temptation, he fell into an abyss of misery.

Doctrines, whether they be good or bad, still continue to have the same influence upon the conduct of men; and to suppose the contrary, is to suppose, that light and darkness can ever cease to produce their ordinary effects. The following doctrine, *Out of the pale of the Romish Church there is*

no salvation, has filled Europe with fires, scaffolds, and massacres. Eradicate this doctrine from every prejudiced heart, and plant in its room the following scriptural truth, *God is no respecter of persons : but in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him*, and, in the place of streaming blood, we shall see streams of charity uninterruptedly flowing through every christian kingdom.

The miser imagines, that riches are the *sovereign good*, and that the highest pleasure consists in counting over and over his splendid hoards. The debauched youth is confident, that the *sovereign good* consists in sensual gratification, and the highest gratification, in the enjoyment of a frail beauty destined to be the prey of worms. Destroy these groundless persuasions by solid doctrines : demonstrate to these infatuated creatures that God himself is the *sovereign good*, and that *this* good is offered to us in Jesus Christ, that the highest enjoyment consists in having the heart penetrated with divine love, and in looking forward with a lively hope of being one day eternally united to God : convince them of these momentous truths, and the charms by which they have been captivated so long, will be immediately broken. Ah ! how delightful is it, to behold such sensual reasoners awaking from their deathful slumber, and crying out with St. Augustine : “ O eternal sweetness ! Ineffable greatness ! Beauty for ever new ! Truth whose charms have been so long unnoticed, alas, how much time have I lost, in not loving thee ! ”

Sound reason must unavoidably submit to the force of these observations, the truth of which is demonstrated by the general conduct of mankind. But, perhaps, the best method of reasoning with the incredulous, is to point out the consequences of their own system. Imagine a man, who, instead of receiving the doctrines of the Gospel, publicly presumes to make the following declaration : ‘ I believe not in God the Creator ; I trust not in any Mediator, nor acknowledge any sanctifying Spirit. And, as I believe not in God, so I believe not in what is called his Church ; nor do I look upon the communion of those who worship him, in any other light, than that of a mere chimera. I believe not in the remission of sins. I look for no resurrection, nor indulge any hope of everlasting life. Let us eat and drink ; for to-morrow we die.’ Was any man seriously to repeat in your hearing such a confession of his faith, would

you fix upon such a one for the management of your estate? would you entrust him with the charge of your wife, or chuse him for the guardian of your children? Would it be possible for you to depend upon his word, or confide in his honesty? Now, imagine this very infidel, in some future season, convinced of his former errors, and firmly persuaded, that he acts under the eye of an omniscient God, who will bring *every work into judgment, with every secret thing*. Suppose him smiting upon his breast with the penitent publican, and determining with St. Paul, to know nothing *among men, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified*. Would you not indulge a better opinion of this man, in his believing state, than when he rejected, with modern philosophers, the doctrines of christianity? It could not possibly be otherwise. So true it is, that, in certain cases, your conduct will give the lie to your arguments against the utility of doctrines.

J. J. Rousseau professes to have hated *bad maxims* less than *evil actions*; when, as a wise man, he should have detected the former as the cause of the latter. It is not sufficient, that we profess to make the principles of virtue the ground of our conduct, unless that basis be established upon an immoveable foundation. Without attending to this rule, we resemble those Indians, who suppose the world to be founded upon the back of an elephant, while that elephant is supported by the shell of a tortoise; and who, perfectly satisfied with such a discovery, attempt not to understand any more of the matter.

A system of morality, how beautiful soever it may appear, unless it be supported by doctrines of the utmost consistency and firmness, may be compared to a splendid palace, erected upon the sands: in some unexpected storm, it will assuredly be swept away, proving, at once, the disgrace of its builder, and the ruin of its inhabitant.



CHAP. IX.

AN APPEAL TO EXPERIENCE.

EXPERIENCE goes far in the decision of many difficult questions, and before it, the most subtle sophism

cannot long maintain its ground. To this, therefore, we cheerfully appeal for the happy effects of the Gospel. Ye incredulous sages of the day, shew us a *single* enemy to the doctrines of revelation, who may truly be called a humble man, conducting himself soberly, justly, and religiously, in all the trying circumstances of life. Through the whole circle of your infidel acquaintance, you will seek such a one in vain.

If it be said, that J. J. Rousseau, though a professed sceptic, presented us with the portrait of a perfectly honest man : We answer, in the first place, that J. J. Rousseau rejected not the Gospel, as an obstinate enemy ; but rather counted it an affliction, that he was unable to embrace its doctrines : and secondly, that this philosopher was equally destitute of humility and religion.

It must be confessed, that there are multitudes of inconsistent persons in the world, who constantly deceive themselves, and who frequently delude others, by their fallacious notions of *faith* and *incredulity*. We meet with many, who, while they rank themselves in the number of believers, are usually employed in the works of infidels : and, on the other hand, we observe divers penitent worshippers, who, through an excess of humility, account themselves no better than infidels, while they manifest in their conduct the fidelity of christians. But these particular exceptions are insufficient to destroy the general rule here contended for : since the former must be looked upon as *believers*, and the latter as *infidels*, only in appearance. The first have not sincerity enough to acknowledge their secret incredulity : and the last have not light sufficient to determine their exact advancement in the christian faith. The latter deserve our pity, while the former merit our indignation.

But turn your eyes upon an enlightened believer. Behold St. Paul, after his memorable submission to the persecuted Jesus ! the love of God possesses his soul, and he consecrates all his powers to the service of his exalted Master. Appointed to instruct the ignorant, he discharges his important commission with indefatigable zeal. Carrying to the afflicted both spiritual and temporal succours, he appears to be borne, from east to west, as upon the wings of an eagle. He is ready to spend and be spent, for the common interests of mankind. He proves his fidelity and gratitude to Christ, at

the hazard of his life. His magnanimity and fortitude, his resignation and patience, his generosity and candour, his benevolence and constancy, are, at once, the amazement of his enemies, and the glory of his followers. Behold this converted pharisee, and acknowledge the wonderful efficacy of evangelical doctrines.

You slaves of philosophical prejudice ! how long will you mistake the nature of doctrines so happily adapted to humble supercilious man ; so perfectly calculated to destroy both presumption and despair ; to bend the most hardened under the tender pressure of mercy, and carry up grateful believers to the sublimest summit of virtue ? Behold three thousand Jews submitting, at the same instant, to the constraining power of these doctrines. Through their transcendent efficacy, innumerable miracles are still daily operated among us. They dispel the mists of ignorance, they destroy the seeds of injustice, they extinguish irregular desire, and open in the heart of a source of universal charity ! Thus, *the multitude of them, that formerly believed, were of one heart and one soul* : &c. Enjoying together the *sovereign good*, it was not possible for them to contend with each other for the trifling enjoyments of time and sense. God had given them his only-begotten Son ; how then could they refuse any thing to their indigent brethren.

Long after St. Luke had borne testimony to the unexampled charity of christians, we find Tertullian citing the following testimony which his heathen cotemporaries were constrained to bear in favour of the same christian virtue. *Behold, say they, how these christians love, and are prepared to die for each other !* Yes, adds this celebrated christian father, ' We who have but one heart and one soul, are not afraid to have one purse. Among us all things are common, except our wives.'

If the testimony here produced should be disregarded, because drawn from the writings of a professed advocate for christianity, we will readily come to another test. Pliny bears witness to the pure conversation of the persecuted christians of his time. And the Emperor Julian himself, one of the most enlightened, as well as implacable enemies of christianity, exhorted his heathen subjects to practise among themselves the duties of charity, after the example of christians, *Who abound, said he, in acts of benevolence.* And as to the joy,

with which they sacrificed their lives, when occasion so required : *They go*, continues he, *to death, as bees swarm to the hive.* Such influence have the doctrines of our holy religion upon the conduct of its sincere professors, even by the confession of their inveterate enemies.

It appears then, that St. Paul was employed like an experienced moralist, while he was engaged in erecting the sacred edifice of morality, upon the solid foundation of evangelical truths. And the doctrines he made choice of, as peculiarly suited to this purpose, were those which respect the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. Upon these he laid the greatest stress, and from these he drew his most persuasive arguments to virtue and piety. Witness that memorable exhortation delivered to his Roman converts—‘ I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

To withhold from the degenerate this cheering truth, that *they are bought with a price*, is to deny them one of the most powerful motives to love and *glorify God in their bodies and in their souls*, which appertain to him by the endearing right of *redemption*, as well as by that original right of *creation*, to which they are generally rendered insensible by the afflictions and disappointments of life. Instruct them concerning the sanctity of the divine law ; set before them the guilt of their innumerable offences ; and the just fears, to which such discoveries must naturally give rise, will make existence itself an intolerable burden. But when the Gospel of our redemption begins to dissipate their doubts, and allay the anguish of their remorse, they will be enabled to go rejoicing on their way, through the strictest paths of obedience and morality.

CHAP. X.

AN OBJECTION ANSWERED, WHICH MAY BE DRAWN FROM THE ILL CONDUCT OF UNHOLY CHRISTIANS, TO PROVE THE INUTILITY OF THE DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL.

THEY, who exalt philosophy against revelation, imagine, that to invalidate the preceding reflections, they need only make the following reply : ‘ All christians receive the Apostles’ Creed ; but their faith is, in general, unattended with the happy effects you have been recounting. Crimes of every kind are committed by the disciples of Jesus ; and their doctrines, instead of producing charity, engender little else but dispute and persecution.’ The serious nature of this objection demands a suitable reply.

A true christian was never known to be a persecutor : The cruel disputes which have arisen among faithless christians, have not necessarily sprung from the nature of scriptural doctrines, but rather from the pride of those tyrannical doctors, who have contended for their particular explications of such doctrines. To insinuate, then, that the doctrines of the Gospel should be utterly rejected, because some church-men have taken occasion from them to stir up vehement contests, would scarcely be less absurd, than to contend that anarchy is to be preferred before an excellent code of laws, because unprincipled lawyers are accustomed to foment strife, and have it always in their power to protract a cause. As to the extravagant explications, which the subtilty or power of men has substituted in the place of evangelical doctrines, they can no more be said to prove the falsity or unprofitableness of such doctrines, than the detested policy of tyrants can weaken the force of that apostolic precept, *Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers.* But let us come to the main knot of the difficulty.

They, who have unfeignedly embraced the doctrines of Christ, far from committing a variety of crimes, have carried every virtue to a degree of perfection, surpassing almost the conception of other men. Rousseau and Montesquieu acknowledge, that even in those countries, where the Gospel

has but imperfectly taken root, rebellions have been less frequent than in other places. The same acknowledgment must be made by every unprejudiced observer, with regard to vice of every kind. Many offences, it must be owned, are every where common among the professors of christianity; but they would have been abundantly more frequent, if antichristian philosophers had been able to take from them the little respect they still retain for a revealed Gospel. Moreover, there are many rare virtues, which chiefly flourish in secret: and they, who deserve the name of christians, might astonish incredulity itself, had not Christ commanded them to perform their best services in so private a manner, that the left hand might not know how the right was engaged.

Nothing can be more unjust, than to impute those evils to the christian religion, which evidently flow from incredulity and superstition, fanaticism and hypocrisy. Jesus Christ requires of his followers an ardent love both to God and man; such a love as was exemplified in the whole of his own conduct through life. The *incredulous* deny, either wholly or in part, the debt of grateful love, which the innumerable mercies of God impose upon them: since while the atheist refuses to acknowledge him as the *Creator* and *Preserver* of man, the deist rejects him as the author of our *redemption* and *sanctification*. The *superstitious*, indeed, acknowledge these immense debts; but they pretend to pay them with idle ceremonies, and vain repetitions of tedious forms. The *fanatic* attempts to discharge them with unfruitful fervours, and the *hypocrite* with stupid grimace. But these errors cannot reasonably be considered in common with our holy religion, which exposes and condemns them all.

The life of a christian, so called, must necessarily become pure, when he is actually possessed of christian faith, i. e. when he is strongly persuaded, that he walks in the presence of the Almighty, who being his father by *Creation*, becomes so in a still more affectionate and effectual manner, by the mysterious exertions of his *redeeming* and *sanctifying* grace. These three astonishing operations of the Supreme Being, are undoubtedly three grand evidences of his love to man, and must be considered, as so many abundant sources of christian charity, among the members of his church. Hence,

the man, who acknowledges but one of these proofs, cannot possibly be united either to his brethren, or to his God, with so ardent an affection, as he who admits and experiences all the three. The divine charity, here spoken of, is produced in the heart, by means of faith, and from it proceeds every social virtue, with every praise-worthy action.

All this is conformable both to reason and experience. A weak subject will fear to disobey a powerful king, whose eye is actually upon him: at least, so long as the subject is penetrated with this thought, *The King observes me*. A son will never exalt himself against a *good* father, while he believes, that his father, in every possible sense, is *good* with respect to him. Brethren, who cordially acknowledge each other as such, will not dare to abuse one another in the presence of a father who is infinitely powerful: and while he leads them to take possession of a kingdom, which his generosity has divided among them; they will not threaten to murder each other, under the eyes of their parent, for the possession of any little enjoyment that presents itself upon the road. The sons of Jacob had never sold their brother Joseph, if they had been firmly persuaded, that Israel would one day discover their crime: and they would have conceived the greatest horror, had they really believed, that their Heavenly Father was present at the impious transaction, resolving to call them, at some future season, to a severe account, in the face of the world. A faith, which has no influence upon the conduct, is no other than the faith of hypocrites, upon whom our Lord denounces the most terrible judgments, threatening them with everlasting banishment from his presence, into that outer darkness, where shall be *weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth*. *I will shew thee my faith*, faith St. James, *by my works*. *If any man say*, continues St. John, *I believe in God, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar*. The same principles, which in the present moment gain the ascendancy in man, give rise to the words and actions of the moment: and hence that saying of the Apostle, *Whosoever abideth in him* [Christ] *sinneeth not: whosoever sinneth, hath not seen him*, through the medium of a true and lively faith.

If there are found professors of christianity, in whom the truths of the Gospel have failed to produce a holy conversation, we may take it for granted, that such persons are *infidels* in disguise, and totally unacquainted with the Gospel, except

it be in theory. The faith which is common to these nominal christians, is purely *speculative*, not differing less from the *solid* faith of a true believer, than a sun upon canvass differs from that, which spreads light and heat among surrounding worlds. As a plant cannot be nourished by the superficial application of strange sap to its rind, but by a sap peculiar to its own nature, which, flowing beneath its bark, penetrates, enlivens, and nourishes every part of the plant : so the conduct of a man cannot possibly be reformed by notions or doctrines collected from books, but by those, which, penetrating beyond his judgment, insinuate themselves into his heart, and become incorporated with his very being.

This answer cannot justly be regarded as a vain subterfuge. To be convinced of its solidity, it will be sufficient to consider how the soul is affected according to the different degrees of any impression that is made upon it. While Jacob was still lamenting the supposed death of Joseph, Reuben informed him, that his beloved son was yet alive, and enjoying the second place of dignity in Egypt. These tidings at first appeared delusive to the good old man, who was no otherwise affected by them, than by some extravagant relation. But when the affirmations of Reuben were seconded by the joint testimony of his other sons, his earnest attention was immediately excited, his incredulity was gradually overcome, and his fainting heart began to revive. The waggons and presents of Joseph now appearing, in confirmation of his childrens' report, his doubts were entirely dissipated : *My son*, cried he, *is yet alive ! I will go and see him before I die.* This animating persuasion, *Joseph is yet alive*, seemed to restore the languishing patriarch to all the vigour of former years. He renounced a terrestrial Canaan ; he turned his back upon the tombs of Isaac and Rachel ; and, with all the courage of youth, set forward to embrace his newly discovered son in Egypt. So certain it is, that a truth in which we are deeply interested, will change, in some degree, our very nature, and modify the soul itself.

Thus the Gospel of God our Saviour affects every true believer. And why should Egypt have greater charms than Heaven ? Or, why should an invitation from the virtuous son of Rachel have greater weight, than that which comes from the divine Son of Mary ? Were the fruits which Joseph sent his father to be preferred before those of the Spirit, with

which Christ replenishes his favoured Israel? Or, did the dissembling sons of Jacob merit greater credit, than the Apostles of our exalted Lord, though seconded by that noble army of martyrs, who have sealed with their blood the truths of the Gospel; Alas! if the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, (for we speak not here of those human additions, by which it is too frequently disfigured and weakened) had but deeply penetrated our hearts, we should bear testimony, by our conduct, to the truth of the following assertion—*If any man be indeed a christian, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; all things are become new.*

But why should we go back to the times of Jacob, to prove that doctrines have an influence upon the conduct of men, in proportion to the degree of faith, with which they are received? Let us return and cast a retrospective view over the various circumstances of our past life. If we have at any time felt a lively persuasion of the truth of the Gospel: If, at our first approaching the sacramental table, or after hearing some pathetic sermon we have really believed, *that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself*, and promising his people, in return for their temporary labours, everlasting rewards;—have we not, at such a moment, perceived the love of God and man, springing up in our hearts? Now, if this partial persuasion has spread itself through the whole soul, would not our devotion, our humility, and our charity, have been carried to a much higher degree of perfection, than we have hitherto experienced: Would not our good works of every kind, have been abundantly more excellent and numerous, than we can now possibly pretend to?

On the other hand, let us look back to the days of youth, and we shall recollect a time, in which the doctrines of the Gospel began to lose the little influence they had once maintained over our conduct: we shall remember, at least, when the licentious principles of worldly men, and the false maxims of infidel philosophers, insinuated themselves into our corrupted hearts. And have we not since that time experienced, that the strictest connexion subsists between those *maxims* and *immorality*? Have we not from that unhappy period, become more debauched in sentiment, less circumspect in our outward behaviour, and more disposed to trample upon the principles of natural religion, as well as upon evangelical pre-

cepts? From these observations, we shall proceed to draw the following inferences.

1. If morality may be compared to a tree whose fruit is for the nourishment of mankind, *true doctrines* may be considered as the roots of this tree. Take away these doctrines under pretence that they embarrass morality, and you ridiculously cut away the roots of this sacred plant, lest they should prove an impediment to its rising perfection. Now he, who thus seeks the morality of the Gospel by reprobating evangelical doctrines, would act entirely consistent with his character, was he to plant his orchards with trees deprived of their roots, in order that they might produce the more excellent fruit.

2. As in the vegetable kingdom, fruits are nourished and matured by that vegetative energy, which draws the sap from the root, refining, and distributing it among the several branches: so in the moral world, charity and good works can only be produced by that living faith, which first receives the doctrines of truth, and then becomes a kind of vehicle to their invigorating virtue. This faith was rightly characterized by Christ and his Apostles, when they represented it as the grace, by which we are principally saved; since this grace alone is capable of producing in us that lively hope, that ardent charity, and that universal obedience, which will ever distinguish the believer from the infidel. He, therefore, who declaims against this scriptural faith, whether he be a novice or a philosopher, indirectly pleads the cause of vice, and gives sufficient proof of his spiritual ignorance.

3. From what has been advanced, we may infer the necessity there is, of avoiding the mistake of the gnostics on the one hand; and the error of incredulous sages on the other: the former of whom, contending for a *speculative faith*, salute Christ as their *Lord* though they refuse to obey his commands; while the latter holding *faith* in the utmost derision, and depending upon their own power for the performance of every good work, pollute, by unworthy motives, the most excellent of their actions.

CHAP. XI.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

AS many have taken great offence in observing, how little effect the doctrines of the Gospel have upon the lives of christians so called, it becomes us here to enquire into the causes of this grand evil.

The doctrines which distinguish christianity from theism, have this peculiarity, that no man can possibly receive them, unless he has first sincerely embraced the doctrines of theism. He must believe in God, before he can believe in Christ; he must have the sincerity of an honest heathen, before he comes to the possession of christian charity. It is usual with the whole multitude of outward professors to cry out in their public services; *We believe in Jesus Christ. We believe in the Holy Ghost: &c.* though their faith, it may be, is not equal to that of devils, who believe in the existence of a rewarding and avenging God, with sincerity sufficient to make them tremble before him. These hypocrites can no more be said to believe, from the heart, the latter articles of the Apostles' Creed, than those children, who are yet unacquainted with the alphabet, may be said to have perused and digested the most profound authors. The doctrines of the Gospel must necessarily appear both useless and absurd to those, whose faith in God is not sufficient to penetrate them with a holy fear: for as we cannot arrive at manhood without first passing through the state of infancy, so we cannot cordially receive the latter part of the Apostles' Creed, till we have first embraced the former part by a lively and stedfast faith. Why did Caiaphas refuse to believe in Christ? Because he was but an hypocrite with respect to the Jewish faith. On the contrary, why did Cornelius the centurion so readily believe? It was, undoubtedly, because the sincerity of his faith in God had prepared his heart for the reception of faith in Christ. *Every man, faith this divine Saviour, 'that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. Ye who believe in God, believe also in me: and I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth.'*

These fundamental doctrines compose the ladder of evangelical truth, in which he, who takes offence at any single step, runs a double hazard, that of ascending no higher, and even that of falling from the step where he has obstinately determined to take up his rest. *He that doeth truth, cometh to the light*; but he that refuses the first truth, places himself beyond the possibility of receiving those, which are of a more sublime nature. If he has not first observed the dawn of the Gospel day, he can never contemplate our divine Sun, when shining in his meridian brightness.

The articles of the christian faith may be compared to a course of geometrical propositions, the last of which always suppose a perfect knowledge of the first. To require of spiritual infants any high and important acts of faith in Jesus Christ, or in the Holy Spirit, before they are taught to entertain just notions of the Supreme Being, would be equally unreasonable, as for a man to pretend, that it is possible to make a good geometrician of an ignorant peasant, by instructing him to repeat the terms of Euclid's last propositions, without ever bringing him to a true understanding of the first. If, then, the generality of christians are contented with learning merely to repeat our doctrinal terms, we must expect to see them as far from manifesting the virtues of St. Paul, as the superficial peasant from possessing the solidity of Euclid.

CHAP. XII.

OTHER REASONS GIVEN FOR THE LITTLE INFLUENCE, WHICH THE FOREGOING DOCTRINES ARE OBSERVED TO HAVE UPON CHRISTIANS IN GENERAL.

PROFITABLY to teach the doctrines of the Gospel, there are certain rules necessary to be observed; and where these rules are either unknown or neglected, the Gospel becomes of little importance.

1. A true doctrine, in order to have its due effect, must be announced with *purity*. It should neither be mutilated by hasty contradictions, nor corrupted by vain additions. The prince of error equally serves his own interest, by per-

plexing the truth, as by spreading a falsehood : and when errors are added to evangelical truths, those truths may be compared to excellent medicines unhappily mingled with dangerous poisons. Thus, the doctrines of future punishments is not only deprived of its utility, but becomes really pernicious, by the addition of another doctrine, which teaches, that a sum of money left as the price of prayer for a departed soul, will effectually soften, and even terminate its pains.

2. A doctrine should not only be delivered in the *purest* manner, but they who announce it should study to demonstrate its excellency and power, by the whole course of their conduct. Were *leprous* physicians to cry up a specific against the *leprosy*, it cannot be imagined, that lepers, in general, would anxiously adopt a remedy, which had been attended with so little effect upon the recommenders of it. We here intimate, not without the utmost regret, that too many of the clergy destroy the effect of their doctrines, by the immorality of their conduct.

3. To give scriptural doctrines their full effect, it is necessary to make them pass from the understanding to the will, or from the judgment to the heart of those, who admit them. It would be in vain to procure for a patient the most efficacious remedy, if, instead of applying it in the method prescribed, he should think it sufficient to touch it with his lips, or should content himself with drawing in the grateful odour exhaling from it. To such a patient, however, the greater part of christians bear a strict resemblance, who speculate upon the Gospel, without ever embracing it with that lively *faith, which worketh by love.*

4. It is not sufficient, that these doctrines should be preached in their *native purity* : but it is equally necessary, that they should be preserved in the *same purity* by those, who receive them. Our Lord makes this solemn declaration to sinners : *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* Yet how is it, that many thousand christians who admit this important truth, remain to the present day in a state of impenitence ? It is because they mingle with it the following pernicious error : though I spend the *present moment* in sin, God will assuredly give me grace to repent in the *latter part* of my life. Hence that lamentable inattention to the duties of religion which is universal among us at this day.

5. Very frequently the doctrines of the Gospel are attended with no considerable effect upon those who admit them, because the salutary operation of these truths is counteracted by the powerful influence of earthly desires indulged in the heart. Thus, in a disordered stomach, the most wholesome food is deprived of its virtue. To remedy this evil, it is necessary to enter upon a regimen too severe to be regarded by an obstinate patient, and upon an absolute necessity of which an inattentive physician will not peremptorily insist.

6. Where doctrines of the most humiliating tendency have not first made a deep impression, there the consolatory doctrines of the Gospel tend only to uphold the sinner in a course of impiety. Those preachers, who favour the false judgment of worldly men, wanting either courage or experience wisely to administer the doctrines of the Gospel, so that they may alarm the impenitent and console the dejected; these preachers, instead of eradicating, do but increase the evil we lament. It cannot, indeed, be denied, that they offer many sacred truths to the world: but, while they do not nicely distinguish, and apply them to the different states of their hearers, as they only draw their bow at a venture, it is no wonder that their arrows so frequently fall beside the mark. These perplexers of truth contribute as little to the conversion of sinners, as a physician would contribute to the recovery of the sick, who, without any prudent selection, compounding together all the drugs of an excellent pharmacopœia, should indiscriminately offer the same confused recipe to every patient.

7. The doctrines of christianity are frequently delivered as the *opinions* of men, rather than as the *declarations* of God, founded upon events much better attested than the most certain historical facts: and to this *single* error the inefficacy of those doctrines may, in a good degree, be imputed. Were reason and conscience made to walk in the front of the Gospel, the want of a Redeemer would be more universally experienced in the world, than it has hitherto been. But while the preachers of that Gospel neglect to assert the depravity of human nature; or while they omit, in confirmation of so melancholy a truth, to make the most solemn appeals to the consciences of men; so long we may expect to see their ill-directed labours universally unsuccessful. Had these teachers in Israel an experimental acquaintance with those truths, upon which they presume openly to descant, their word would

speedily be attended with unusual efficacy; their example would give it weight, and, in answer to their fervant prayers, the God of all grace would set his seal to the truths of the Gospel.

Whenever the messengers of religious truth shall become remarkable for the purity of their lives, and the fervency of their zeal, their doctrines will soon be attended with sufficient influence in the christian world, to overthrow the objection we have been here considering, and effectually to stop the mouth of every gainsayer.



CHAP. XIII.

*THE DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY HAVE AN
OBSCURE SIDE. THE REASONS OF THIS
OBSCURITY. THE ERROR OF SOME PHI-
LOSOPHERS IN THIS RESPECT.*

THE *Gospel*, says J. J. Rousseau, ‘is accompanied with marks of truth, so great, so striking, so perfectly inimitable, that the inventor of it appears abundantly more admirable than its Hero. But, after all, this Gospel is filled with incredible things, with things that are repugnant to reason, and which no sensible man can possibly conceive, or admit. Remove all the difficulties,’ continue the admirers of this philosopher, ‘dissipate all the obscurity with which your doctrines are surrounded, and we will cheerfully embrace the Gospel.’

Extraordinary things appear always *incredible*, in proportion to our ignorance. Thus, an ignorant negro of Guinea would look upon that man as a deceiver, who should assert there are places in the world, where the surface of rivers become so solid, at particular seasons, that without bridge or boat, whole armies may pass them dryshod. And it is well known, that the doctrine of *Antipodes* gave no less offence to the celebrated geographers of a former age, than is unhappily given to the deistical sages of modern times by the doctrine of a *divine Trinity*.

As we become better acquainted with spiritual things, instead of despising the truths of the Gospel as altogether in-

credible, we shall be truly convinced that J. J. Rousseau passed the same kind of judgment upon the doctrines of christianity, as a savage might be expected to pass upon some late discoveries in natural philosophy. The sciences present a hundred difficulties to the minds of young students. By entering upon an obscure course, they, at length, attain to superior degrees of illumination: but, after all the indefatigable labours of the most learned professor, the highest knowledge he can possibly acquire, will be mingled with darkness and error. If men of wisdom, however, do not look with contempt upon those sciences, which are usually taught among us, because all of them are attended with difficulties, and most of them are too abstruse to permit a thorough investigation; how absurd would it be in us, for these insufficient reasons, to reject that revelation, which may be considered as the science of celestial things.

To despise the doctrines of the Gospel, because they are attended with some degree of obscurity, is to act in as full contrariety to the dictates of philosophy, as those of revelation. No follower of J. J. Rousseau could blame us, without reproaching himself, if, arguing from the erroneous principles of his master, we should make the following declarations—"Natural philosophy *abounds with incredible things, which no sensible man can either conceive or admit.* I have *arteries*, it is said, which carry my blood, with a sensible pulsation, from the heart to the extremities of my body; and *veins*, which without any pulsation, reconduct that blood to the heart: but, since the union of the arteries and veins is, to me, an inconceivable mystery, I cannot admit the generally-received opinion, respecting the circulation of the blood. I see the needle of the compass perpetually turns itself toward the pole, and I have observed that the loadstone communicates to it this disposition: but, as it cannot be ascertained how all this is effected, I look upon the voyages of Anson and Cook, which are said to have been performed by means of the compass, just as infidels are accustomed to look upon the Gospel. I will no longer encrease the number of these idiots, who unthinkingly pass over a bridge, while they are perfectly unacquainted with the plan upon which it was built; and who vulgarly depend upon their watches with regard to the regulation of time, without being thoroughly versed in the mechanism of time-

“pieces. I will never again be persuaded to take a medical
 “preparation, till I have penetrated into the deepest mys-
 “teries of physic and chymistry. In short, I resolve neither
 “to eat, nor drink; neither to sow my grounds, nor gaze
 “upon the sun; till I am enabled perfectly to comprehend,
 “whatever is mysterious in vegetation, light, and digestion.”
 If the preceding declarations might reasonably be considered
 as evident tokens of a weak and puerile judgment, the follow-
 ing affirmation undoubtedly deserves to be considered in the
 same point of view.—“I grant, that the science of *physics*
 “has its unfathomable mysteries: but, as a philosopher of
 “the first rank, I insist upon it, that nothing of a mys-
 “terious nature should be suffered to pass in religion, that
 “deep *metaphysical science*, which has for its objects, the
 “Father of spirits, the relation in which those spirits stand
 “to their incomprehensible Parent, their properties, their
 “light, their nourishment, their growth, their distempers
 “and their remedies, their degeneracy and their perfec-
 “tion.” Ye, who are anxious to be saluted as *Lovers of*
wisdom, if such is the absurdity of your common objections
 against the Gospel of God our Saviour, what poor pretensions
 have you to the boasted name of *Philosophers*!

This answer may be supported by the following observa-
 tions.

In the present world, we serve a kind of spiritual appren-
 ticeship to *the truth, which is after godliness*: and it is not
 usual, hastily to reveal the secrets of an art to such as have
 but lately bound themselves to any particular profession.
 This privilege is justly reserved for those, whose industry and
 obedience have merited so valuable a testimony of their
 master’s approbation. See John xiv. 21.

A physical impossibility of discovering, at present, certain
 obscure truths, forms the vail, by which they are effectually
 concealed from our view. In order to form a perfect judg-
 ment of the material sun, it is necessary in the first place to
 take a near survey of it: but this cannot possibly be done
 with bodies of a like constitution with ours. The same may
 be said of the Father of lights. God, as a spiritual Sun,
 enlightens, even now, the souls of the just: but while they
 continue imprisoned in tenements of clay, their views of his
 matchless glory must necessarily be indistinct, since they can
 only behold him *through a glass darkly*. Hence, we argue

with St. Paul, that as spiritual things are spiritually discerned, the natural man can never truly comprehend and embrace them, but in proportion as he becomes spiritually minded by regeneration.

The wise author of our existence initiates us not immediately into the mysteries, which lie concealed under many of our doctrines, for the very same reason, that a mathematician conceals the most abstruse parts of his science from the notice of his less intelligent pupils. If a preceptor should affect to bring children acquainted with all the difficulties of algebra, before they had passed through the first rules of arithmetic, such an attempt would deservedly be looked upon as ridiculous and vain. And is it not equally absurd to expect, that the profoundest mysteries of the Gospel should be opened to us, before we have properly digested its introductory truths, or duly attended to its lowest precepts?

The Almighty will never perform a useless work, nor ever afford an unseasonable discovery. For the *practice* of solid piety, it is by no means necessary, that we should be permitted to fathom the *depth* of every spiritual mystery. It is enough, that fundamental truths are revealed, with sufficient perspicuity, to produce in us that faith, which is the mother of charity. When the Gospel has proposed to us the truths, which give rise to this humble faith, and presented us with such motives, as evidently lead to the most disinterested charity, it has then furnished us with every thing we stand in need of to work out for ourselves a glorious salvation. The followers of Christ are required to tread in the steps of their master, and not deeply to speculate upon the secret things of his invisible Kingdom.

If a clear knowledge of the mysterious side of our doctrines, is no more necessary to man in his present state, than an acquaintance with every thing that respects the art of printing, is necessary to a child, who is studying the alphabet; why then do we peevishly complain of the sacred writers, for not having thrown light sufficient upon some particular points to satisfy an inordinate curiosity? Our scruples on this head should be silenced by the constant declarations of those very writers, that the time of *perfection* is not yet arrived; that they themselves were acquainted, but in part, with the mysteries of the Kingdom; and that the language of mortality is unsuitable to the sublimity of divine things.

The sea has its unfathomable abyſſes, and an extent unknown to the moſt experienced navigators : but, notwithſtanding all this uncertainty, the merchant is perfectly contented, if he can but glide ſecurely over its ſurface to the port for which he is bound.

If we are placed here in a ſtate of probation, it is reaſonable that our *underſtanding*, as well as our *will*, ſhould be brought to the trial. But how ſhall the Almighty proceed to make proof either of the *ſelf-ſufficiency*, or the *diffidence* of our underſtanding ? No happier method can poſſibly be adopted than that of pointing us to ſuch truths, as are partly manifeſt and partly concealed, that we may ſearch them out with *diligence*, if their is a poſſibility of comprehending them ; or, if placed above the higheſt ſtretch of our faculties, expect with *patience* a future revelation of them.

To acquire, and manifeſt diſpoſitions of a truly divine nature, is poſſible only under a religious œconomy, whoſe doctrines are in ſome degree myſterious, and whoſe morality has ſomething in it painful to human nature. Why then, do thoſe perſons, who affect to be wiſer than their neighbours, univerſally take offence at ſuch a religion ? If a myſterious veil is thrown over the operations of *nature*, and the workings of *providence* ; why ſhould we expect the more wonderful operations of *grace* to be laid unrefervedly open to every eye ? Philoſophy, it is preſumed, will not dare thus fooliſhly to deſtroy the rules of analogy. *Humility* is neceſſary to the perfection of our underſtanding, no leſs than *ſagacity* and *penetration* ; on which account God is pleaſed to bring our humility to the teſt. And this he does, by diſcovering to us ſo much of truth, as may enable us to recogniſe it on its firſt appearance ; at the ſame time, permitting the objects of faith to be ſurrounded with difficulties ſufficient to leave room for the exerciſe of that humble confidence in his veracity, and that true poverty of ſpirit, which philoſophers are pleaſed to hold up, as juſt ſubjects of ridicule. Sound knowledge, however, and unaffected humility, will always keep pace with each other. Hence that memorable confeſſion of Socrates, *All that I know, is, that I know nothing* : and hence that remarkable declaration of St. Paul, *If any man think, that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.*

It is impoſſible, that any thing ſhould have a greater ten-

dency to keep man at a distance from God, than that arrogant self-sufficiency, with which modern free-thinkers are usually puffed up. This unhappy disposition must be totally subdued, before we can come to the fountain head of pure intelligence : and to effect this, the Almighty permits our understanding to be embarrassed and confounded, till it is constrained to bow before his supreme wisdom, in acknowledgment of its own imbecility. But it is always with the utmost difficulty, and not till after a thousand vain devices have been practised, that human nature can be forced into this state of self-abasement. Here Socrates and St. Paul may be regarded as happy companions, experiencing, in common, that submissive meekness, and that profound humility, which are so terrible to many professors of wisdom. And it is but reasonable, that the piety of the one, and the philosophy of the other, should have been established upon the basis of those *rare* virtues, which formed the ground of the following address from Christ to his Father : *I thank thee, O Father ! Lord of Heaven and earth, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.*

It becomes us so much the more to moderate the sallies of an impatient curiosity, with respect to truths of a mysterious nature, since Christ himself has given us an example of the obedience due to the following apostolic precept—‘ Let no man think of himself more highly than he ought to think ; but let him think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.’ This condescending Saviour was content, as Son of man, to remain in the humble ignorance of which we speak. If, in order to have satisfied his curiosity, with respect to the day of judgment, he had attempted to explore the secret counsels of the Almighty, there can be no doubt but his gracious Father would have admitted him into that impenetrable sanctuary. But he rather chose to leave among his followers an example of the most perfect respect and resignation to the will of that Father.

What was said by St. Paul concerning heresies, may, with propriety be applied to that obscurity, which accompanies the doctrines of the Gospel. *There must be heresies among you, that they, which are approved, may be made manifest.* Monf. de Voltaire, who saw not any utility in the proof here mentioned

by the Apostle, was accustomed to censure revelation, because the doctrines it proposes are incapable of such incontestible evidences as mathematical problems. He considered, not, that lines, circles, and triangles, falling immediately under the senses, are subjects of investigation peculiarly suited to the natural man. He recollected not, that many of Euclid's demonstrations are as incomprehensible to the greater part of mankind, as the mysteries of our holy religion are incomprehensible to the generality of philosophers. And lastly, he perceived not, that, if all men were to pique themselves upon their skill in mathematics, and were equally interested in the proportions of circles, squares, and triangles, as in those relations, which subsist between fallen man and an incomprehensible God, there would be excited, among ignorant mathematicians, as many warm disputes, as are continually arising among *ill-instructed* christians.

The justness of these observations will become more apparent, if we consider the importance of that virtue, which is called, in scripture language, *The obedience of faith*. Man originally suffered himself to be seduced with the hopes of wonderful effects to be produced by the fruit of a mysterious tree; founding his frail hope upon the *simple declaration* of the tempter. God, in order to humble the soul, is pleased to restore us through the hope of powerful effects to be produced by the truths of a mysterious revelation; a *sweet hope*, whose only basis is the *simple declaration* of the God of truth. And it is undoubtedly reasonable, in every respect, that the cause of our restoration should be thus directly opposed to the cause of our fall. The obedience, that is unattended with difficulties can never be regarded as a reasonable proof of our fidelity to God. Had He merely commanded us to believe, that *The whole is greater than a part*; or that *Two and two make four*: in such case, no room would have been left for a reasonable distribution of rewards and punishments. The Deity could not possibly have been disobeyed, since we can no more refuse our assent to these manifest truths, than we can deny the existence of the Sun, while we are rejoicing in his meridian brightness. It appears, therefore, perfectly necessary, that every truth, proposed to the faith of man in his probationary state, should have an obscure, as well as a luminous side, that it may leave place for mature deliberation, and of consequence, for the merit or demerit of those, who are called to *the obedience of faith*.

To desire a revelation without any obscurity, is to desire a day without night, a summer without winter, a sky without a cloud. And what should we gain by such an exchange? Or rather, what should we not lose; if those intentional obscurities, which conceal some parts of celestial truth, should be as needful to man in his present situation, as those clouds, which frequently deform the face of the heavens, are beneficial to the earth? The faith, which is unaccompanied with any thing mysterious, no more merits the name of *faith*, than the tranquility of a man, who has never been in the way of danger, deserves the name of *bravery*. An expression of our Lord's to one of his doubting disciples, is sufficient to throw the most convincing light upon this matter: *Thomas*, said he, *because thou hast SEEN me, thou hast BELIEVED*; but what recompence or praise can be due to such a faith? *Blessed are they, that have not SEEN, and yet have BELIEVED.*

To conclude. What occasion would there be for the exercise of either wisdom or virtue, was the one only good path presented so clearly to our view, that it would be difficult to make choice of any other? Or to what good purpose could true philosophy serve, which has no other use, except that of teaching us to regulate our principles and govern our actions, in a manner more suited to the perfection of our nature, than is customary with those, who are led by prejudice and passion?

From all these observations, it may justly be argued, that to insist upon having religious doctrines without obscurity, and a revelation without mystery, is to destroy the design of the Supreme Being, who hath placed us here in a state of trial. It is to confound the goal with the course, the conflict with the triumph, and earth with Heaven. Nay more: it is to confound the *creature* with the *CREATOR*. That, which is finite, must never hope to comprehend the heights and depths of infinity. Archangels themselves, though endowed with inconceivable degrees of wisdom and purity, will continually find unfathomable abysses in the divine nature. And if so, is it not to abjure good sense, as well as revelation, to turn our back upon the temple of truth, because there is found in it *a most holy place*, where the profane are never suffered to enter, and the furniture of which, even true worshippers can neither clearly explain, nor fully comprehend.

CHAP. XIV.

IN ANSWER TO THE GRAND OBJECTION OF PHILOSOPHERS AGAINST THE DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL, IT IS ARGUED, THAT THE ADVANTAGES OF THE REDEMPTION ARE EXTENDED, IN DIFFERENT DEGREES, TO ALL MANKIND, THROUGH EVERY PERIOD OF THE WORLD.

AS sophistical reasoners had a hundred objections to propose against the doctrine of Socrates, who was a true philosopher; so the philosophers of this age are industriously framing objections to the doctrines of that Gospel, which unerring wisdom has announced to the world. To determine, whether or not those objections are just and unanswerable, we shall here consider that, which appears to be the most weighty, in the balance of those two companions in error, *Monf. de Voltaire* and *J. J. Rousseau*. *If your doctrine of Redemption*, say they, ‘is really as important as you represent it, why has it been preached only for these last eighteen centuries? If it was of so much consequence to mankind, God, without doubt, would have published it sooner, and more universally.’

Answer. The doctrine of Redemption was not primarily necessary to mankind: since there was a time, when unoffending man stood in no greater need of a Redeemer, than a healthy person stands in need of a physician. At that time, natural religion was suitable to the state of man, and the doctrines of deism were the spiritual food of his soul. But, as *medicine* is not less necessary than *nutriment* to a sick person, so fallen man stands in need of the *Gospel* as well as of *natural religion*. And as strong nourishment would be a species of poison to a man enervated by a raging fever, so the tenets of theism administered *alone* to a sinner, who burns with the disorderly fervours of pride, must inevitably prove fatal to the health of his soul. Thus the presumption of some philosophers is increased by the doctrines of deism, as the fever of a debilitated patient is redoubled by those very cordials, which would increase the strength of a vigor-

ous person. And this may serve as a proof, that the natural religion of *sinless* man, is as little adapted to man in his *corrupt* estate, as the sweet familiarity of an affectionate infant, is suitable to the character of a daring and disobedient son.

It is necessary here to observe, that there are two kinds of deism; *that* of the *humble* sinner, who is not yet acquainted with the Gospel, and *that* of the *presumptuous* reasoner, who rejects it with contempt. The centurion Cornelius, who lived in the practice of piety before he was perfectly acquainted with Christ, and the penitent publican alluded to by our Lord, were deists of the first class, and such as might well be esteemed the younger brothers of christians. The second class is made up of those theists, who trample Revelation under their feet, and who may properly be called the presumptuous pharisees of the present day. It is the haughty deism of these men, that a false philosophy would substitute in the place of the Gospel. The judicious author of *The new Theological Dictionary*, has characterized these two kinds of deism with an accuracy, peculiar to himself. "Deism," says he, "was once on the high way from atheism to christianity; but to day it is usually found upon the road from christianity to atheism."

To assert, that the doctrine of the Redemption has been announced for no more than eighteen centuries, is to suppose there can be no appearance of light till the Sun has risen above the horizon. So soon as the work of redemption became necessary, in that very day it was announced to man. When our first parents had received from their merciful judge the sentence, that condemned them to misery and death, he immediately gave them a promise, that in some future day a repairer of their evils should be born of woman, who should *bruise the head of the Serpent*, i. e. who should crush, at once, all the power of the tempter, and the pride of the sinner. In consequence of this gracious covenant, which was, indeed, the first promulgation of the Gospel, God implanted in man an interior principle of Redemption, a seed of regenerating grace, which should, in the end spring up to everlasting life. Now, this principle was nothing less than a ray from the living word, which was afterwards to be visibly united with our nature, in order to raise man from his dishonourable fall, and, finally, to procure

for him a state superior to that, which he originally enjoyed. Nothing can be more explicit upon this point, than the following declaration of St. John. *In Him [the living word] 'was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shined in darkness; and the darkness,' in general, comprehended it not. This was, however, the true light, which lighteth, more or less, every man, that cometh into the world.* When, therefore, a conceited free-thinker superciliously exclaims: *If the doctrine of the Redemption had been necessary, it would have been published in the earliest ages of the world*—such objection should serve as a manifest token of his ignorance in this matter, since that important doctrine was mercifully announced to the very first offender. If that doctrine was afterwards corrupted by tradition; if rebellious man began to exalt himself as his own Saviour; or if through impatience, he set up false mediators, instead of patiently expecting the fulfilment of Jehovah's promise: all this evidently proves his extreme need of a Redeemer. In short, if the greater part of the Jewish nation rejected this divine Saviour, in the days of his outward manifestation, and if prejudiced deists still continue to reject his offered assistance, all that can be proved by their unrelenting obstinacy, is the greatness of their guilt and the depth of their depravity: just as the conduct of a patient, who abuses his physician, suffices only to demonstrate the excess of his delirium.

Several reasons may be here produced, which might have engaged the Father of mercies to defer the external manifestation of our promised Redeemer, for a period of four thousand years.

1. It is probable, that, as every thing is discovered to operate gradually in the natural world, the same order might be established in the moral world. Even since the time of Christ's outward manifestation, the influence of his redeeming power has but gradually discovered itself in our yet benighted world. He himself compared the Gospel to a little leaven, which spreads itself by slow degrees over a bulky mass of meal; and to a small seed, from which a noble plant is produced. To this we may add, that a portion, of time, which appears long and tedious to us, appears wholly different in the eyes of the everlasting I AM, before whom a thousand years are no more than a fleeting day.

2. If immediately after the commission of sin, God had

sent forth his Son into the world to raise us from our fall, before we had experienced the melancholy effects of that fall; such an hasty act, instead of manifesting the perfections of the Deity, would have drawn a veil of obscurity between us and them. The divine mercy, discovered in Jesus Christ, might then have appeared as insignificant to us, as to the arrogant deist, who, notwithstanding the crimes, with which the world has been polluted for near six thousand years, and in spite of those, which he himself has added to the prodigious sum, has yet the audacity to assert, that there is no necessity for a Redeemer, that man is good in his present state, and that he may conduct himself honourably through it, without the assistance of regenerating grace. Hence it appears, that the outward manifestation of the Messiah was wisely deferred to a period of time far removed from the commencement of the fall.

3. While the visible manifestation of Jesus was delayed, all things were put into a state of due preparation for so great an event. And in the mean time, the seed of regeneration, which was received by man, after God had pronounced the first evangelical promise, was as sufficient to save every penitent sinner, as the dawn of day is sufficient to direct every erring traveller.

This merits an explanation. The first man, to whom the promise of Redemption was made, contained in himself the whole of his posterity: and *this promise* wonderfully *powerful*, as being the *word of God*, had an indescribable effect upon the whole human race, implanting in man a *seed of regeneration*, a *Logos*, a *reason*, a *conscience*, a *light*; in short a *good principle*, which, in every sincere enquirer after truth, has been nourished by the grace of God, and seconded by the pious traditions of Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Evangelists, or true Philosophers. Unhappy is it for those, who, stifling in themselves every gracious sentiment, have treated this internal principle, as the Jews once treated their condescending Lord, and as sinners still continue to treat a preached Gospel. If such are not *saved*, it is not through want of an *offered Saviour*, but because they have wilfully shut their eyes against the twilight, the opening dawn, or the meridian brightness, of the Gospel Day.

Nothing can be more unreasonable than the objection, to which we now return an answer. To argue, that God would

be unjust, if, having given a Saviour to the world, he should not reveal that Saviour in an equal degree to all mankind, is to argue, that God is unjust, because, having given a Sun to the earth, he has not ordained that Sun equally to enlighten and cheer every part of the globe. Again—To insinuate that Christ cannot properly be regarded as the Saviour of mankind, because innumerable multitudes of men are not even acquainted with his name, is to insinuate, that the Sun is utterly useless to the deaf, because they have never heard the properties of that Sun described, and to the blind, because they have never seen his cheering beams. Lastly. To conclude that the Gospel is false, because it has not rapidly spread itself over the whole world, or because it is not observed to operate in a more hasty manner the happy changes it is said to produce :—thus to argue, is to reason as inconclusively, as a man who should say ; The tree, that produces Jesuit's bark, is an insignificant and useless tree : for, 1st, It grows not in every country. 2dly, It has not always been known. 3dly, There are persons in the country where it grows, who look upon it as no extraordinary thing : and 4thly, Many, who have apparently given this medicine a proper trial, have found it unattended with those salutary effects so generally boasted of.

Turning the arguments of our philosophers against their own system, we affirm, that the Messiah was manifested in a time and place peculiarly suited to so great an event. With respect to the *time* ; He lived and died, when the human species had arrived at the utmost pitch of refinement and learning. Had He appeared two or three thousand years sooner, He must have visited the world in its infant state while ignorance and barbarity reigned among the nations ! but in the days of Augustus and Tiberias mankind may be said to have reached the highest degree of maturity, with respect to knowledge and civilization. Now, as it is necessary, that he, who bears testimony to any memorable transaction, should be a *man* and not a *child* ; so it is equally necessary, that Christ should have appeared in the most polished period of the world, as Mediator between God and man.

Deists sometimes tell us, that the force of historic evidence is greatly diminished by lapse of time, as a taper placed at too great a distance loses much of its brightness. If Christ

then had offered himself a ransom for all, many ages sooner than unerring wisdom had ordained, the incredulous might have urged, that the history of a miraculous event, reported to have happened in so remote a period of time, was most probably corrupted with uncertain tradition, and rendered unworthy of credit.

On the other hand, if the accomplishment of the promise, had been delayed some thousands of years longer, the faith and patience of believers would have been called to a proof incompatible with the weakness of humanity. And the impious might have said, concerning the first coming of Christ, what they have long ago tauntingly spoken of his second: *Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.*

What is here observed with respect to the *age*, in which the Messiah was cut off, is no less true of the *season*, the *day*, and the *hour*. He offered himself a sacrifice for the sins of the people in the *noon day*, at the solemn feast of the *Passover*, and at that *season* of the year which naturally invited the dispersed Jews to visit the whole city. The *place* was, like the *time*, peculiarly adapted to such an event: a country, in which the promise of Christ's coming had been frequently repeated. Moreover, He became obedient unto death in the time predicted by the Prophets; before a people, who possessed the oracles of God; under the eyes of the high priest; before Herod the king, together with the grand council of the nation; before Pilate, who was lieutenant of the greatest prince on earth; at the gates of Jerusalem, in the centre of Judea, and nearly in the centre of the then known world. Thus, the external manifestation of our glorious Redeemer may be compared to a Sun, whose *rising* was preceded by a dawn, which benignly opened upon the first inhabitants of the earth; and whose *setting* is followed by a lovely twilight, which must necessarily continue, till He shall again ascend above our horizon, to go down no more. In this point of view, the scriptures uniformly represent the sacrifice of Christ. St. Paul expressly declares, that, *by one offering, He hath perfected for ever them, that are sanctified*: i. e. all those in every nation, who fear God and work righteousness. We argue, therefore, with this Apostle, that *as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so, by the righ-*

teousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

From these observations we conclude, *first*—That the Gospel has been more or less clearly announced, ever since the time, in which a Redeemer became necessary to man, *Secondly*: That Jesus Christ openly manifested Himself in a time most proper for such a discovery. *Thirdly*: That the work of redemption is as necessary to mankind, as the assistance of medicine is necessary to those, who are struggling under some dangerous disease. *Fourthly*: That an *explicit* knowledge of the Redeemer and his salvation is as desirable to those, who feel themselves ruined by sin, as the certain knowledge of a physician, possessed of sovereign remedies, is consoling to the patient, who apprehends his life in imminent danger. *Fifthly*: As languishing infants may be restored by the medicines of a physician, with which they are totally unacquainted, so Jews, mahometans, and heathens, provided they walk according to the light they enjoy, are undoubtedly saved by Jesus Christ, though they have no clear conception of the astonishing means employed to secure them from perdition. And *lastly*: That the grand argument advanced against the Gospel by Monf. de Voltaire and J. J. Rousseau, is abundantly more specious than solid.

CHAP. XV.

REFLECTIONS UPON THE DANGER TO WHICH MODERN DEISTS EXPOSE THEMSELVES.

IN refuting the objection of superficial moralists proposed in the preceding chapter, we may, perhaps have afforded them ground for another, full as specious and solid.

OBJECTION. ‘If it be allowed, that in every age salvation has been extended to all the true worshippers of God, whether they have been pious Jews, such as Joseph, Hezekiah and Josiah: just men among the gentiles, such as Melchisedec and Aristides; or heathen philosophers, who have walked in the fear of God, such as Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato—And if all these virtuous men have been saved without subscribing to the doctrines of the Gospel; why

may not deists and modern philosophers be permitted to enjoy the same salvation, while they reject those doctrines?"

ANSWER. There are three grand dispensations of grace. Under the *first*, every heathenish and unenlightened nation must be ranked; the Jews under the *second*; and christians under the *third*, which is a dispensation abundantly more perfect than either of the former. The followers of Mahomet may be classed with modern Jews, since they are deists of the same rank, and have equally deceived themselves with respect to that great Prophet, who came for the restoration of Israel.

Those Jews, mahometans. and heathens, who *fear God and work righteousness*, are actually saved by Jesus Christ. Christ is the *Truth* and the *Light*: and these sincere worshippers receiving all the rays of truth, with which they are visited, afford sufficient proof, that they would affectionately admire and adore the Sun of righteousness Himself, were the intervening mists removed, by which He is concealed from their view. But it is wholly different with those, who beholding this divine Sun, as He is revealed in the Gospel, determinately close their eyes against Him, and contemptuously raise a cloud of objections to veil Him, if possible, from the view of others. Every virtuous heathen has manifested a love for *truth*, while many of our philosophers, in the pride of their hearts, reject and despise it. The former wrought out their salvation, though favoured only with the glimmering dawn of an evangelical day: the latter, surrounded with the meridian brightness of that day, are anxiously seeking the shadowy coverts of uncertainty and error. The former were saved, according to that apostolic declaration: 'glory, honour and peace to every man that worketh good, to the' christian and the 'Jew first, and also to the gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God.' And of this number was the Apostle Paul, who *obtained mercy*, because he was ignorantly a persecutor of the truth, *living*, at the same time, *in all good conscience before God*. Nor can it be doubted, but the same grace, with which St. Paul was visited in these circumstances, will, in various degrees, illumine and purify every soul that resembles him in uprightness and sincerity. The latter will be condemned by virtue of the following declarations: 'This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds

were evil. God will render unto them, that are contentious and do not obey the truth, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the christian and the Jew first, and also of the gentile.'

From these citations we may infer, that, in several proportions, the salvation of virtuous heathens will differ as greatly from the salvation of true christians, as the brilliancy of an agate is different from that of a diamond. *Many mansions* and different degrees of glory are prepared *in the house of our Father*. 'There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory.' So also will it be in the resurrection of the dead, when God will render unto every man, according to his works.

The highest degrees of glory are reserved by the righteous Judge of all the earth, for the most faithful of his servants. The honourable privilege of being seated at the right hand of Christ will be conferred upon those, who have trodden in their Master's foot-steps, through the narrowest and most difficult paths of resignation and obedience. On the other hand, God will display the most terrible effects of his righteous anger upon those, who have trampled under foot the greatest and most frequent offers of divine grace, according to that exclamation of the Apostle: *How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?* Since thus obstinately to despise the highest degrees of glory, which may be attained under the Gospel, and daringly to brave the threatenings denounced against those who reject that Gospel, discovers in the heart a cold indifference to real virtue, together with a sovereign contempt for the divine author of it.

As true virtue, like a beautiful plant, is continually rising to a state of maturity; so true philosophy is constantly aspiring after the highest attainable degrees of wisdom and purity. If any man neglects those means, which conduce to the perfection of virtue, when they are once proposed to him, he gives evident proof, that he has neither that instinct of virtue nor that true philosophy, which cannot but choose the most excellent end, together with the surest means of obtaining it. What would our philosophers say to a man, who, affecting to aspire after riches, and being called to receive a large quantity of gold, should inconsistently refuse it, in the following terms: 'Many persons have been rich enough

with a little money, to prevent them from starving, and I have no inclination to exceed them in point of fortune?" The objection proposed in this chapter is founded upon a like sophism, and amounts but to an equal argument: "Jews and virtuous heathens have received assistance sufficient effectually to secure their salvation, and we have not presumption enough to desire any extraordinary advantage above them."

It is difficult to form a just idea of the conceitedness of those boasted moralists, who despise every help afforded by the Gospel, because some heathens, without such assistance, have been acceptable to God. We may compare it to the supposed self-sufficiency of a contemptible subaltern officer, who, being presented with a more honourable commission from his prince, should reject it, and cry out: "The commission is false, and they who present it are no better than deceivers. I have no anxiety to quit my present post. I aspire after no greater honours than those I possess. Many thousands have faithfully served his majesty in the capacity of subalterns; nay, common soldiers themselves have received testimonies of his royal approbation: and why should my services afford him less satisfaction than theirs?" "Was a corporal, in my hearing, thus to excuse his rejection of a monarch's offered kindness, I should suppose, either that he had no just conceptions of the honour, by motives too unworthy to be avowed. But this excuse would be *insolent* as well as *pitiful*, had the terms of the commission ran thus:—"Either serve your prince with fidelity, in the post to which he exalts you, or expect to be treated with the utmost severity."

Now such is the case with all those, who *obstinately* reject the Gospel, and *perseveringly* trample under foot the richest offers of unmerited grace. They either reject the truths of revelation through haughtiness of spirit; or they are held back from embracing them, through the secret gratification of some inordinate appetite. Observe here, the ground of those memorable declarations of our blessed Lord: "Preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned. He that believeth not the Son, *after hearing him evangelically announced*, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. He is condemned already: for every

one, that doeth evil, hateth the light *of the Gospel*, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprovèd.'

Upon this principle as conformable to experience as to sound reason, the Gospel is not *absolutely* rejected, except by those who are either visibly corrupted, as Pilate and Felix, or secretly depraved, as Judas and Caiaphas. And it was to persons of this character, that Christ addressed himself in the following terms: 'How can ye believe, who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? If any man will do the will of Him that sent me,' and follow the light that is imparted to him, *he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.* Hence, when any, who have been consecrated to Christ by baptism, are seen withdrawing from the footstool of their master to the schools of philosophy, or, at least, making no advances in true holiness; we may rest assured, that their decline is caused, or their spiritual growth prevented, by the secret indulgence of some vicious inclination. These philosophizing moralists and these lukewarm disciples may be compared to the fruit, that falls before it has attained to the perfection of its species: examine such fruit, and you will find under a beautiful appearance, either a destructive worm, or loathsome rottenness. Such is the apostatizing deist under the most specious forms he can possibly assume.

When J. J. Rousseau expressed himself in the following terms: *If God judges of faith by works, then to be a good man, is to be a real believer*; he was not far beside the truth, provided, that, by *a good man*, he intended one, who lives in *temperance, justice, and the fear of God*; since every man, in whom these virtues are discoverable, is assuredly principled in the true faith. Such a one is a real believer, according to that œconomy of grace, under which Job, Josiah, and Socrates shone out to the glory of God; men, who either possessed principles of faith, or whose best actions are no more to be admired, than those of our domestic animals.

This writer had less distinct views of truth, when he added, *The true christian is the just man; unbelievers are the wicked*: since there are *just men*, who are not yet *christians*, as there are studious persons, who cannot yet be accounted profound scholars. Moreover, there are many, who, like the centurion Cornelius, do not yet believe the Gospel, because they have never heard that Gospel explained with precision

and fidelity : and surely such deserve not to be termed absolutely unjust men. The latter proposition approaches indeed nearer the truth, *Unbelievers are the wicked*; yet this is false; except the term *unbeliever* be taken for one, who *obstinately* disbelieves the Gospel : since a good man, who receives the first part of the Apostles' Creed, may yet, like Nathaniel and Nicodemus, be so forcibly held back by involuntary prejudice, with respect to the other parts of the same Creed, that he may fluctuate long between truth and error. It is by propositions so vague and insidious, that our philosophers delude themselves and beguile their disciples.

But, replies J. J. Rousseau, 'have we power to believe, or not to believe? Is the not being able to argue well imputed to us as a crime? Conscience informs not, what we are to think, but what we are to do : it teaches us not to reason well, but to act well.' And are all the faculties of man, except his conscience, to be considered as utterly useless, with regard to this important matter? Let it however, be granted, that a wicked and haughty person has it not in his power to *believe*; yet it is highly necessary, that he should *fear* the truth, so long as he gives himself up either to actions or inclinations, that are manifestly evil. Thus the conscious robber can never overcome his fear of justice, so long as he is disposed to continue his iniquitous practices : but if, after making full restitution, he should become sincerely upright, maintaining a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man, he will tremble no more at the idea of judges, tribunals, or executions.

If it be asked, what secret vice it was, that would not suffer so honest a man as J. J. Rousseau to embrace the Gospel? Without searching into the anecdotes of his life, we may rest satisfied with the discovery he has made of his own heart, in this single sentence : *What can be more transporting to a noble soul than the pride of virtue!* Such was the pride which made him vainly presume, that he had power sufficient to conquer himself, without invoking the assistance of God; and by which he was encouraged to assert, that the doctrines of the Gospel were such as *no sensible man could either conceive or admit*. Such was the *virtuous pride*, which would not suffer the pharisees to receive the humiliating truths of the Gospel, and which filled the heart of Caiaphas with jealousy and hatred against Christ.

There is no species of pride more insolent than that, which gives rise to the following language. "It is asserted, that *God so loved the world, as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* These tidings, whether they be true or false, are highly acceptable to many : but, for my own part, I openly declare, that I reject, with contempt, the idea of such a favour. I read with attention those writings, which tend to unfold the mysteries of nature, but resolve never to turn over those authors, who vainly attempt to establish the truth of the Gospel. This subject, though it has occupied the thoughts and engaged the pens of enquiring students for these seventeen hundred years, I shall ever regard as unworthy my attention. I leave it to the vulgar, who are easily persuaded of its importance. My virtues are sufficient to expiate my crimes, and on these I will resolutely depend, as my sole mediators before God." If this is implicitly the language of every man, who obstinately rejects the doctrines of the Gospel, what heights of presumption, and what depths of depravity, must lie open, in the souls of such, to the eye of Omniscience ! Reason and Revelation agree to condemn them. Behold the ground of their sentence. *Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased ; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted ; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble*

Reason itself is sufficient to discover, that before the Supreme Being nothing can appear more detestable than the pride of a degenerate and ungrateful creature. And if so, the deists of Socrates' time must have been far less culpable, than those of the present day. The former, conscious of the uncertainty with which they were encompassed, made use of every help they could procure, in the pursuit of truth, with unwearied assiduity. The latter, presuming upon their own sufficiency, decide against doctrines of the utmost importance, without impartially considering the evidences produced in their favour. The former, by carefully examining every system morality proposed to their deliberation, discovered a candour and liberality becoming those, who were anxiously *feeling after God, if haply they might find him.* The latter, by condemning Revelation, without calmly attending to the arguments of its advocates, manifest a degree of prejudice, that would be unpardonable in a judge, but which

becomes execrable in a criminal, who is pressed by the strongest reasons to search out the truth.

Plato, in the sixth book of his Republic, introduces his Master marking out the dispositions necessary to a virtuous man. *Let us begin*, says Socrates, ‘by recounting what qualities are necessary to him, who would one day become an honest man and a true philosopher. The first quality is the love of truth, which he ought to seek after in every thing and by every means; true philosophy being absolutely incompatible with the spirit of delusion. He, who has a sincere desire to obtain wisdom, cannot confine himself to things that are here below, of which he can acquire but an uncertain knowledge. He is born for truth, and he tends to it with an ardour, which nothing is able to restrain.’ Ye, who oppose philosophy to Revelation, and reject, without thoroughly investigating the doctrines of the Gospel, can you be said to discover an attachment to truth, as sincere as that of Socrates? Do ye not rather esteem *that* an excessive fondness for truth, or even a dangerous species of enthusiasm, which the wisest heathens have looked upon, as the first disposition requisite to an honest man?

Plato and his master, who scrupulously acknowledged the truth wherever they discovered it, were assuredly in a state of acceptance before God, without an explicit acquaintance with Jesus Christ: for where the Almighty hath not strewed, there will He never expect to gather; and where He hath scattered only the *first truths* of the Gospel, there He never will require that precious fruit, which He expects to be produced by the *highest truths* of Revelation. Thus the husbandman is content to reap nothing but barley in a field, where nothing but barley has been sown. But if, after sowing the same field with the purest wheat, it should produce only tares with a few scattered ears of barley; he would, undoubtedly, express a degree of surprize and displeasure, at having his reasonable expectations so strangely disappointed.

In the new Testament we find a remarkable parable to this purpose, where mankind are considered as the domestics of God’s immense household. In this parable, the Almighty is represented as collecting his servants together, and confiding to the care of each a separate loan, to be employed for the mutual interest of the covenanting parties. To one of

his domestics he imparts *five* talents; to another *two*; while a third has no more than a *single* talent committed to his charge: but all are required so to occupy, that their gains may be proportionate to the several sums entrusted to their fidelity. Now, if the christian with *five* talents of spiritual knowledge acquires no advantage over the Jew, who has received but *two*; is it not evident, that he has acted the part of an unfaithful servant? Nay, he is to be esteemed even more unprofitable than the heathen, who suffers his single talent to lie unimproved; since amidst all his trifling gains, he has slothfully concealed *three* valuable talents, while the other has buried but *one*. But were the first and the last to derive equal advantages, from the disproportionate privileges permitted them to enjoy, while the latter would be received as a good and faithful servant, the former might deservedly be treated with an unusual degree of severity by his insulted Lord. This parable may assist us to conceive, that a philosopher, who is called by baptism to evangelical perfection, and yet contents himself with practising the morality of a heathen, has not in reality so much solid virtue as a sincere deist bred up in the bosom of paganism.

Our progress in morality, like our advancement in science, is to be estimated by considering the circumstances in which we are placed, and the privileges we enjoy. A dramatic piece composed by a child or a negro, might be received with plaudits, which would be justly hissed off the stage, had it been produced by a Shakespear or a Corneille. A traveller, who expresses his admiration at the address, with which savages manage a hatchet of stone, would express equal astonishment at the weakness of his countrymen, should he see them casting aside their axes of iron, and felling their trees with ill-formed implements of flint. Thus, after admiring the successful efforts of Socrates, who drew many sacred truths from the chaos of paganism, how astonishing is it, to behold modern philosophers patching up a confused system of deistical morality, to be substituted in place of the Gospel. Wherever such retrograde reasoners are discovered, their insignificant labours must be universally deplorable by the lovers of truth. But when these champions of false wisdom endeavour to bury, under the ruins of christianity, those important truths, which heathens themselves have formerly discovered, it is impossible

to behold their impious efforts without feeling all the warmth of an honest indignation.

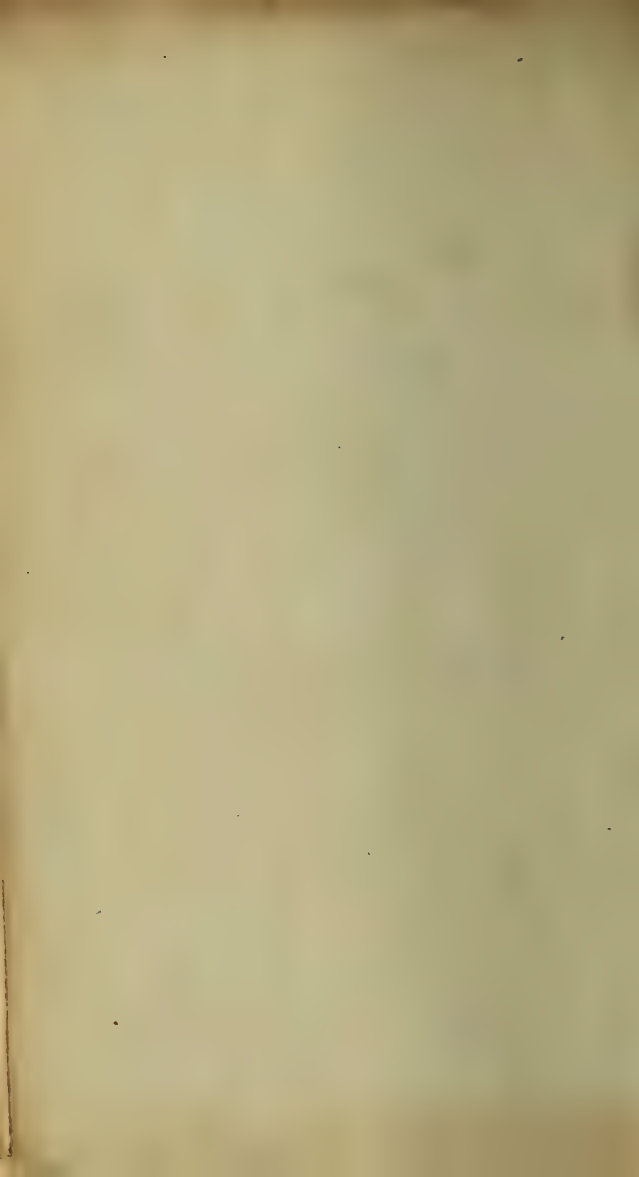
We shall conclude this Essay by transcribing a part of that ancient testimony which was borne by Lactantius, to the power of those doctrines for which we contend.

‘ That which many have discovered, by the assistance of natural religion, to be their indispensable duty, but which they have never been able either to practise themselves, or to see exemplified in the conduct of philosophers; all this the sacred doctrines of the Gospel assist us to perform, because that Gospel is wisdom in its highest excellence. How shall philosophers persuade others, while they themselves continue in a state of perplexity? Or how shall they repress the passions of others, while, by giving way to their own, they tacitly confess that nature, in spite of all their efforts, is still triumphant. But daily experience testifies, how great an influence the ordinances of God have upon the heart.—Give me a passionate, slanderous, implacable man; and, through the power of our Gospel, I will return him to you gentle as a lamb. Give me an avaricious man, whose greediness of gain will suffer him to part with nothing; and I will return him to you so liberal, that he will give away his money by handfuls. Bring me a man, who trembles at the approach of pain and death: ere long, he shall look with contempt upon crosses, fires, and even the bull of Phalaris itself. Present me with a debauchee, an adulterer, a man wholly lost to good manners: you shall shortly behold him an example of sobriety, uprightness and continence. Give me a cruel and blood-thirsty man: his ferocious disposition shall suddenly be succeeded by real clemency. Give me an unjust man, a stupid person, an extravagant sinner: you shall shortly behold him scrupulously just, truly wise, and leading a life of innocence.—Such is the power of heavenly wisdom, that it is no sooner shed abroad in the heart, but, by a single effort, it chases away folly the mother of sin. To compose these invaluable ends, a man is under no necessity of paying salaries to *masters of philosophy*, and passing whole nights in meditating upon their works. Every necessary assistance is imparted without delay, with ease, and free from cost; if there be not wanting an attentive ear, and a heart desirous of wisdom. The sacred source to which we point, is plenteous, overflowing,

and open to all men : the celestial light, we announce, indiscriminately arises upon all, who open their eyes to behold it.'

' What philosopher has ever done so much ? Who among them is able to perform such wonders ? After having passed their lives in the study of philosophy, it appears that they have neither bettered themselves nor others, when nature causes them any great resistance. Their wisdom serves rather to cover, than to eradicate, their vices. Whereas our divine instructions,' i. e. the doctrines of the Gospel, *so totally change a man, that you would no longer know him for the same person.* Lact. Lib. iii. cap. 26.

FINIS.



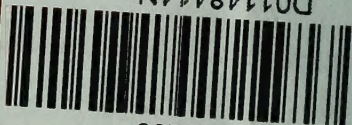


Duke University Libraries



D01148414N

D01148414N



DUKE-LSC